




3 1761 11631096 2



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
University of Toronto

<https://archive.org/details/31761116310962>

No. 166



99

N° 166

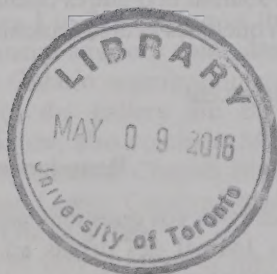
ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 41st Parliament

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Monday 2 May 2016



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 41^e législature

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Lundi 2 mai 2016

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 416-325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 416-325-3708.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 2 May 2016

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This week, the House will be paying tribute to the deceased former members Joan Fawcett and Keith Brown. I ask that all members have their memories in mind during prayers today.

Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm honoured to welcome a friend of mine to Queen's Park today: Karen Dickenson. Welcome to Queen's Park, Karen.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my absolute pleasure to introduce aboriginal learner role models from the Council of Ontario Universities' Future Further organization. They are here today to promote the Let's Take Our Future Further initiative launched by Ontario's universities to promote awareness of achievements by aboriginal learners. We welcome all of Queen's Park to join them this afternoon at their reception which runs from 12 to 1 p.m. this afternoon in room 230.

Once again, a warm welcome to Queen's Park from all of us.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Page Grace Fletcher: Her father, Mark Fletcher, from Simcoe North is in the public gallery today.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Good morning. It's my great pleasure to welcome and introduce, as part of Children's Mental Health Week, May 1 to 7, members of the youth action committee, a provincial advisory committee to the Children's Mental Health Ontario organization and The New Mentality. Seated in the gallery are Beth Nowosad, co-chair; Nicole D'Souza, also co-chair; Matt Leaton; Travis Franklin; Chizara Anucha; Cherish Bluecoat; Shannon Hope; Mary-Anne Leahy; Caralyn Quan; and Jenny Gomez. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm very pleased to introduce today Tim Wylie of Wylie Insurance. He hails from the tri-villages of Gorrie, Wroxeter and Fordwich.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: We are happy to welcome in the House today members of the Ontario Co-operative Association. I would like to introduce Ms. Erin Morgan, executive director of the Ontario Co-operative Association; M. Luc Morin, directeur général au Conseil de la coopération de l'Ontario; M^{me} Lucie Moncion, présidente et chef de la direction de l'Alliance des caisses populaires de l'Ontario; Frank Lowery, VP, general counsel and secretary of the Co-operators Group; Simone Swail, incoming chair of the joint co-operative com-

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 2 mai 2016

mittee; et Philippe Boissonneault, président du conseil d'administration de l'Alliance des caisses populaires de l'Ontario.

I would also like to invite all members to join us tonight in room 228 for their reception.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Rick Orr, who's with the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario in my riding of Perth-Wellington.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to introduce local insurance broker Greg Robertson. His father went to school with me at St. Mike's. Also here are Debbie Thompson, from St. Michael's, the past president of the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario; Bryan Yetman, another past president; and Jason Famme, all here to entertain us later tonight in the legislative dining room from 5 to 7. All are welcome. Please come.

Mr. Bill Walker: I don't believe they are in the House yet, but there's a busload of students, parents and alumni from OSCVI high school in Owen Sound coming to join us in the Legislature today.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to welcome page captain Isabela Rittinger; her parents, Ana and Mark Rittinger; sister Carla Rittinger; and grandparents Cecilia and Laurence Conceicao. I have looked in both ends and have not been able to find them, so if they're here, please give us a wave. Thank you very much.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to introduce to the Legislative Assembly this morning Eric Renault, Pamela Renault and Rita Player from the great riding of not Chatham-Kent-Essex, but Windsor West.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce members of the Canadian Mental Health Association who are here with us in the gallery today. We're joined by Camille Quenneville, the CEO of the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario division; Gail Czukar, the CEO of Addictions and Mental Health Ontario; Erin Boudreau, manager of policy and community engagement, the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario; and Deb Sherman, the executive director of the Ontario Peer Development Initiative.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd like to welcome Stephen Darling from Burk's Falls, with Stan Darling Insurance, who is down with the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario here at Queen's Park.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm delighted to introduce Reg Bateman, president and CEO of Smith Williams and Bateman Insurance Brokers of Newmarket, who is in the House with us today.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Please join me in welcoming the news that the Windsor Spitfires will be hosting the 2017 MasterCard Memorial Cup—just announced today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd like to welcome them.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'd like to also introduce and welcome the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario as they are here for their 2016 awareness day. President Doug Heaman, CEO Jim Murphy and chair Michael Brattman are here with us watching question period today. Welcome.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I just wanted to welcome a number of guests who are with us today, who were here in the media gallery earlier this morning for the introduction of my private member's bill on door-to-door sales. We have my constituency staff, Anne Wood and Charlotte Rouse. We have my old intern, Olivia Labonté, and we have a number of members of my seniors' advisory group. We have Laura Longhurst, Richard Yorke, Ted Mulvihill, Richard Kihn, Karen Dickenson, Harvey Pellegrini, Wendy Taylor, and my mother, Myroslava Oleksiuk. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Michael Harris: I want to welcome Doug Heaman from my riding, who is with the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario and president of Advocate Insurance Group in Kitchener-Waterloo. Welcome.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I too want to welcome reps from the insurance industry, from the great region of Durham. I see Debbie Thompson; I hear Bryan Yetman is here, and others. Welcome.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We're joined by our page captain Brendan Weeks this morning. Here in the gallery with him is his proud mother, Susan Tiam-Fook Weeks, as well as his father, Kevin Weeks. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions?

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Seeing no further introductions, I believe there is a unanimous consent: the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to wear green ribbons today to recognize Children's Mental Health Week in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services is seeking unanimous consent to wear the green ribbons. Do we agree? Agreed.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Minister of Finance. On April 19, the Minister of Finance stood in the Legislature and said that hydro rates are going down, but yesterday, everyone's hydro rates went up. So my question to the Minister of Finance is: Is he willing to

stand in the Legislature again and say that his hydro rates are going down?

1040

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, what I referenced—and the member opposite knows all too well—was that investments were made by our government to the tune of over \$30 billion to ensure that we have greater integrity and ensure that we have stability in our grid. Furthermore, we eliminated dirty coal from emissions in our province. Ninety per cent of our emissions are now free of carbon dioxide, and the member opposite knows that all too well.

Those come at a cost, to ensure that our future is protected and that we become more competitive going forward. He knows that our long-term plan had estimated much higher fees, and that has not occurred.

He also knows that going forward we are going to ensure we'll continue to provide integrity in our grid and provide further stimulus in our economy. That has been happening, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister of Finance: The Minister of Finance made a contention that his hydro rates were going down. That is not happening anywhere else in the province. So the question is: What special deal does the Minister of Finance have that just his hydro rates are going down? Because of the latest increase, everyone in Ontario's rate is going to go up \$70.

I realize it is part of their talking points to talk about coal, despite the fact that the phase-out started under the Progressive Conservatives. Instead of talking points, because every political party agreed on the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order, please. Order. Start the clock.

Finish, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, instead of answering a different question, a very simple, straightforward question to the Minister of Finance: You said that your hydro rates were going down. Are you willing to make that claim again today? Can you expect Ontarians to believe that, because I certainly don't.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Get it out now, because I'm going to tighten up.

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The legacy of the Progressive Conservative Party in the past was blackouts in this province and continued brownouts that always occurred, Mr. Speaker. Furthermore, they left a legacy of tremendous debt because of mismanagement of the electricity system that we are only now paying off completely.

Mr. Speaker, furthermore, we have now invested—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please, Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have invested in more than 15,000 kilometres of transmission and local distribution across our province, a distance of one and one half times from coast to coast in Canada, Mr. Speaker. Anyone who is promising you now that they're going to reduce rates is not telling you the truth.

In the end, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A one-sentence wrap-up.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Anyone who promises lower rates is promising a return to dirty coal in this province, Mr. Speaker. That's what they are talking about. We are not going to do that on this side of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, once again to the Minister of Finance: The drive-by smear on coal didn't work in Whitby—Oshawa because there was no truth to it.

Now, back to the question and back to the real concern, and that's the hydro rates that everyone in Ontario sees as going up except for the Minister of Finance.

Let me give you an example. Last week I was in Thunder Bay, meeting with mayors and councillors from northwestern Ontario communities. I would note that in 2015, the federation of northern municipalities passed a resolution calling for lower hydro rates, as they've been disastrous on the north. Resolute forestry, where I toured, told me they have to shut down parts of their plant every day during peak rate periods to keep their costs down. I guess they don't get the Charles Sousa special.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government stop turning their backs on northern Ontario? When will this government actually have energy policies that don't cripple northern Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

I remind all members that we use each other's titles and/or ridings in this House.

Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the statement that the Leader of the Opposition was referring to is a statement that—in our 2013 long-term energy plan we had certain projected prices, and what the Minister of Finance said is that we're coming well below those projected prices. We're reducing from what we were projecting.

I do want to thank the member for supporting our nuclear refurbishment program. The nuclear refurbishment program, over the next 30 years, will put into the grid electricity prices at 7.7 cents per kilowatt hour, on average, and it will be clean energy.

He doesn't mention that the recent wind prices came in at 8.5 cents, on average, per kilowatt hour—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay. I'm going to ramp it up since you are. We're going to move to warnings.

Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the recent wind prices came in less than the average price of electricity in the grid, at 8.5 cents.

Northern Ontario industrial prices are the third-lowest in North America, better than all the Canadian provinces, better than all the US states. Do you want to see them? Look online and you'll see all—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Time is up.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When I stand, you sit.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In case you didn't hear when it was really quiet, I said we're moving to warnings. The shouting is going to stop.

New question.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. May 1 was a sad day for Ontario. IBI treatment for autistic children five and over is no longer available because of this government's callousness.

Let me share a story of a letter I got from seven-year-old Warren and his family from Bailieboro. He was diagnosed with autism at the age of three. His parents immediately registered Warren for IBI therapy. About one month ago, Warren's parents were notified that Warren was seventh on the waiting list for IBI treatment. They were elated. Unfortunately, because of this government's decision, the rug has been pulled out from underneath this family and Warren. It's not right.

Mr. Speaker, after so many years on the waiting list, why is this government proceeding with these devastating cuts that will take away IBI treatment from Warren and his family? We know how much the minister was upset. Why did the Minister of Finance allow this cut in his budget?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question.

It's very important to acknowledge that we are not removing kids from service. In fact, we are taking those kids who are waiting for IBI, who are over five, who are not in the right developmental window, and putting them into immediate service—330 million new dollars, 16,000 new spaces. I acknowledge that it's a shift. I acknowledge that it's a transition.

I and many of my colleagues and, I believe, members of the opposition have been meeting with families. I've made sure that everyone in the Legislature has all the facts, that they understand the step-by-step process by which this transformation will take place and that the new autism program will provide longer, more intense services and will be tailored to the individual needs of the child.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance because this is his cut.

When the government cuts a service, they say, "It's a shift. It's a transformation"—

1050

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: So \$330 million is a cut?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Energy is warned.
Leader?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, it appears we have struck a nerve. We're decoding their language. A "shift" is their word for a cut. A "transformation" is their word for a cut. They like to say that, sure, they're taking away IBI treatment, but they have enhanced ABA—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Well, I'll do it: The deputy Minister of Finance is warned.

Carry on.

Mr. Patrick Brown: They say they have enhanced ABA, but we now learn from the regional service providers that there is no such thing as enhanced ABA. There is no enhanced treatment for Warren. He has been kicked off the wait-list and given a cheque that will only cover a few months of treatment. Warren and his family deserve better from this government.

My question is directly to the Minister of Finance. Autism doesn't end at five; do you agree with that fundamental concept, yes or no?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry is warned.

Minister?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Of course we agree that autism doesn't end at five.

I'm very concerned about the opposition positioning this investment of \$333 million as a cut. We have 16,000 new spaces that will be provided. Children who are currently receiving IBI will continue to receive that. Guess who will be determining what their transition is? Experts, at their next six-month checkup.

Speaker, I think it's important to acknowledge that there are stakeholders who support this change:

Leslie Suite, the chair of the Regional Autism Providers of Ontario, says, "We are very excited about what this historic investment means for children and youth with autism and their families. More families will receive the right services at the right time."

Suzanne Jacobson, founder of Quickstart: Early Intervention for Autism, said, "Parents spoke and they were heard. The right service at the right time: individualized, expanded and timely services will be life changing. We applaud the Ontario government's ... investment of \$333 million...."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Once again, for the Minister of Finance: The government's backbenches seem to share the government's callous disregard for what this means for families with autism. On Twitter last week, the member from Beaches-East York called the parents of autistic children bullies. These are parents that are frustrated with the province because they can't get the treatment they need.

Mr. Speaker, first the Liberal government took people like Warren's parents to court. Now, they're kicking kids like Warren off the wait-list. When will the government stop their war on autistic children and parents who love them? It's not the right thing. Correct course.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Minister?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I'd like to know when the Leader of the Opposition will stop using the wrong terminology about kicking kids off lists. That implies they're not getting support; they are getting immediate support. Those children he's talking about will go to immediate service.

Interjection: Fearmongering.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It is fearmongering, and I'm very concerned because this does affect families. I appreciate that, Speaker, but it doesn't help, quite frankly, when the opposition isn't communicating—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, Minister, please.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It would also be helpful if the opposition talked about what this will do for the children on wait-lists he speaks about. We will reduce wait-lists for autistic children by half in two years—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin-Caledon is warned.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: —2020.

I just wish the opposition would get the facts. His critic has had the briefing. It's important they convey the facts during this time of transition.

FUNDRAISING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. The Premier created a scandal with her system of secret fundraising quotas. Can the Acting Premier tell Ontarians—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. My comments still stand for this next round of questions; it's for the entire time of question period. If you want to get warned, the next step is that you're named.

Finish, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Can the Acting Premier tell Ontarians which minister had the quota to raise \$430,000 from GreenField Speciality Alcohols and which ministers

are responsible for \$160 million in Liberal government support back to GreenField?

Hon. Charles Sousa: There are two questions there. One is the degree of investments we're making to grow our agricultural industry and support rural Ontario, which is critical. We recognize that ethanol and our growth in ethanol will help the industry as well as move us into the low-carbon economy. The selection process in that is very non-partisan. Ministry officials are the ones who evaluate the companies. It goes through a competitive four-step due diligence process.

The member opposite also talks about fundraising activities. I think the leader of the third party, who is strongly defending her secret union-backed shell corporation, is clear as to why the NDP has not decided to act on the reforms that we're putting forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Increasingly, Ontarians are concerned that this government and this Premier have manipulated and abused the rules around political fundraising in this province beyond anything that we have seen in the past. Now this Premier says, "Just trust me when I rewrite the rules on my own and use my majority to pass them." Speaker, it is simply not credible.

When will this Premier and this Liberal government realize that the rules on how parties and elections are financed must be seen as credible by the people, and agree to put aside her partisan process?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, credibility is exactly what's in question here from the member of the third party. They are obviously stuck in process, because they want to delay further the reforms that are necessary to meet the very demands of the public, and we recognize that.

Our questions to the leader of the opposition are, do you believe that we need to reform third-party advertising? Do you believe that we need to ban corporate and union donations? Do you believe that we need to reduce the maximum amount of those donations? Do you believe that we need to have the constraints necessary on loans, loan guarantees and phantom landowners? Do you believe that reform on by-elections is also important? Do you believe that we need an overall reduction in the spending limits by central parties in election periods and between those elections? Do you believe that we need new leadership, and nomination campaign spending limits on those donation opportunities during those campaigns?

I believe the consensus around this room, and certainly outside of this Legislature, is that we do. That's what we're putting forward, and we expect—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government has spent the last week, or more, attempting to smear anyone who wants an open, transparent panel to make new election rules. In fact—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: They believe that Democracy Watch, newspaper editorial boards, the Green Party of Ontario, the official opposition and the NDP are somehow all trying to delay. Yet when given multiple opportunities to move forward on a fast-moving, independent process that will report back to this Legislature by the end of September, the Premier and her government have repeatedly simply said no.

The real question is, why is the Liberal Party of Ontario insisting on a partisan process that they control?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The real question is, why aren't we moving on the piece of legislation before this democratic House? That is the place to do our business—and it does require public comment. It does have debate. It is a democratic process.

The real question is, why is the leader of the third party defending a secret, union-backed shell corporation? Why are they continuing to throw up roadblocks in the process?

What we need is action, Mr. Speaker. We're prepared to act now.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My second question is also for the Acting Premier. Since January, Ontario has lost 800 full- and part-time nurses. That's nearly 200 per month.

When will the Liberal government stop firing nurses?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I know the Minister of Health will want to respond to this.

But it's important to recognize that we are investing more. Let me be clear: The opposition continues to make disingenuous claims about our health care system. In reality—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Withdraw.
1100

Hon. Charles Sousa: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The opposition fails to tell what are, in fact, the facts. The reality is that we've increased hospital funding by 53% since 2003, from \$11 billion to \$17.3 billion, and we're increasing funding for every single hospital in Ontario this year. This is part of our budget proposal of a \$1-billion increase to health care funding. We will continue to invest in hospitals, and we must recognize that we're moving towards a system where more services are delivered at home and in the community.

The NDP voted against these very measures. They voted against an additional \$270 million for home and community care, they voted against \$75 million for community-based hospice and palliative care, and they voted against \$85 million for community health centres.

We're investing more, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yes, in fact, Speaker, we did vote against a terrible austerity budget, and we're proud of it.

Here are the facts: People in Orillia have learned that 16 beds at Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital will be closed, and the hospital is losing 35 full-time-equivalent

staff. They're losing seven full-time RNs, four part-time RNs, and a nurse practitioner.

The CEO says this: "On the heels of a four-year funding freeze and only a modest increase to base funding for 2016-17, it's increasingly difficult."

When will the Liberal government stop cutting hospitals, Speaker?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question from the leader of the third party, because it allows me to set the record straight when it comes to Soldiers' Memorial. We are investing an additional \$1.3 million in that hospital this year.

But let's hear what else the CEO of that hospital said. It was based on—there's a rehabilitation alliance, the Rehabilitative Care Alliance, which is a province-wide body, and they are making changes which are in accordance with, and in fact recommended by, that alliance.

"The major budget initiative is a bed restructuring plan that will see the establishment of a newly designed program to enhance care for patients"—this is quoting the CEO—"requiring post-acute rehabilitation services and medical care. To develop this new model of care," the hospital has withdrawn from the regional complex continuing care program and is "relocating other beds within the hospital to the new unit to be established on the fourth floor."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We're going to have to rehabilitate the entire hospital system after this Liberal government gets finished with it.

In Windsor hospitals, health care workers right now know that their cuts are coming. The situation has gotten so bad that nurses are getting second jobs and some are leaving in advance, because they're so worried about the layoff notices that are coming. They are so stressed about the impending layoff notices that they are actually leaving their jobs before the pink slip hits them. That's bad for nurses, but it's also bad for patients.

When will this Liberal government start putting patients first and stop cutting hospitals and firing nurses?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Every single indicator that we have with reference to our nurses, despite the fact that the NDP, of course, fired thousands of nurses when they were in power in the 1990s—registered nurses, since 2003, a 12.8% increase; nurse practitioners, a 312% increase in the number practising in the province; registered practical nurses, a 45% increase. Every single measure that we have—and these are independent figures and statistics from the college—demonstrates this government's commitment to continue to hire nurses to provide that important, exceptional front-line care that they do each and every single day.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. The minister was

asked if she knew about the problem with SAMS before it was launched. The minister said, "Nobody told me."

Will the minister now admit that just wasn't true, and will she apologize to the people of Ontario?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I think I've acknowledged many times in this House that SAMS did not roll out the way it should have. No one's denying this.

But let's be clear about what we're talking about. A memo was released. It was written by the project manager for SAMS and it was addressed to the administrators out in the field. I would like to read that memo in its entirety.

What he said on November 1 was, "I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that there have been significant challenges both with the development of the solution and with site readiness. However, this was not unexpected in such a large and complex modernization initiative, and in every instance we have worked together to overcome these challenges."

This was precisely the type of information that was relied upon to roll out SAMS in November 2014.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Unfortunately, I didn't hear an apology. When the minister said, "Nobody told me," that wasn't true, plain and simple. On November 1, the minister received a memo from the SAMS team leader which said that the system faced significant challenges—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm—get the message? Withdraw, please.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: The system was faced with significant challenges. That means she had time to stop the release of SAMS before the damage was done. Instead, she assured everyone that she was confident SAMS would have a seamless rollout the following week.

In previous governments, a scandal like this would have triggered resignations. Has anyone in this government accepted the consequences for such a monumental screw-up? Anyone at all? Because this minister hasn't.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'd like to reiterate that the memo in question was sent not to me but to administrators in the field, and what I'd like to point out—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm wondering if the member opposite is suggesting that he would have pushed the stop button on much-needed innovation based on knowing there were challenges that had been overcome?

Having said that, we know that challenges did exist with the rollout. I have accepted the responsibility for that. I started staff working groups, front-line working groups. We hired PricewaterhouseCoopers to assist us in a third-party evaluation of what needed to be done. We have now fixed 100% of the priority issues identified by the front lines and 95% of the defects identified in the Auditor General's report.

POLICE OVERSIGHT

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Attorney General. When it comes to police accountability, transparency and oversight, this government has been all over the place on this file. It's really done a disservice to not only the people of Ontario, but to the family of Mr. Andrew Loku. Transparency is vital to maintaining public trust in the administration of justice and our justice system.

First, the Attorney General took 30 days to read a report that only she could read. Then, while the Premier made some promising remarks about perhaps releasing this report, the Attorney General said no to questions asked by media to releasing this report, four times. Now, finally, when the government releases the report, they release it late on a Friday. They release only 10 out of 34 pages, and one of those pages is blank. The pages that are released are heavily redacted. In fact, the public is left with more questions rather than answers.

Why does the government continue to disrespect Ontarians and discourage transparency turn after turn?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the member from the third party for his very important question.

As I said, our government is very committed to effective and fair civilian oversight of the police. We are aware that there are concerns about transparency and accountability in current police oversight, so the time has come to look critically at how this system is working. That's why last week we appointed the Honourable Michael Tulloch, who is from the appeal court of Ontario, to lead an independent review of three agencies that oversee police conduct in Ontario.

He has been asked to provide the government with recommendations on ways to enhance the transparency and accountability of the province's three police oversight bodies. Today, I want to thank him for accepting to take on this very challenging review.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, while New Democrats welcome this commission and welcome the appointment of Justice Tulloch, that doesn't answer the question of transparency.

The government likes to talk about transparency time and time again, but when it comes to it, the government does not act on that. The government has failed to act on delivering true transparency. The community has raised a number of concerns around the circumstances of Mr. Loku's death, and the government has an opportunity to provide the transparency. They like to talk about it, but again, they haven't delivered on it.

1110

The public has questions; Mr. Andrew Loku's family has questions; this government can provide the answers. Will the government commit today to releasing a fulsome report—understanding the concerns around privacy—that actually answers the questions that the community has?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: This SIU process has been in existence since 1990. I'll remind the member opposite

that when they were in power, they did not release any of the SIU reports.

We have asked Justice Tulloch to prioritize making recommendations as to how information in SIU reports could be made public in the future. He will also prioritize looking at whether past SIU reports should be made public, and the form this information would take. The government expects to receive these prioritized recommendations in the coming months. Justice Tulloch will conduct broad public consultations, including conversations with the police community, Black Lives Matter and a variety of municipal and community leaders.

I'm confident that, through this review process, we will create a more transparent approach to police oversight that has the confidence of both the police and the public they serve.

ONTARIO'S CREDIT RATING

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Each year, the four credit rating agencies assess the province's fiscal and economic plan following the release of the budget. Their assessment provides an independent analysis and assessment, which they communicate through their rating and outlook for the province. The results are in for the first of the four credit rating agencies as Moody's made their assessment public last week. Can the minister please inform this House on the status of Moody's rating and what this means for our government's record of fiscal prudence?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'd like to thank the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for the question. He was quite right: Following a thorough review of our government's economic and fiscal plan, Moody's recently announced an improvement in the province's rating. Moody's outlook reflects its confidence in our government's plan to grow Ontario's economy and create jobs for Ontarians. The member is also correct in saying that Moody's is the first of the rating agencies to release its rating.

Our government values the input of third-party analysis as an important checkpoint in ensuring that our fiscal plan is credible, reliable and transparent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I'm pleased to hear of the improvement to our government's outlook by Moody's, and I know that this is the result of a credible fiscal plan and the hard work that the Minister of Finance has done.

As the press release by Moody's stated, "The stable outlook on the province of Ontario's ratings reflects our opinion that the province has presented a budget plan with little risk that the debt burden will exceed recent levels." They also forecast Ontario's debt to "fall ... across the medium term and, as importantly, for interest expense to remain manageable as well."

It sounds to me like our government is doing a great job at coming to balance in a way that is fair and responsible.

Can the Minister of Finance please inform this House about the status of our fiscal plan and provide some insight into why Moody's made this change?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you again to the member for allowing me the opportunity to speak about our fiscal plan and the improvement of our outlook, which was, by the way, well received by many investors around the world, as it was recently affirmed in the 2016 budget that our government remains on track to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18 and remain balanced by 2018-19. By continuing to beat our fiscal targets, Ontario's accumulated deficit is \$30 billion lower than it otherwise would have been. Across the board, private sector economists are forecasting Ontario's economy to be among the top two growth leaders in Canada.

We will continue to reduce the deficit through a fair and balanced approach. We continue to implement our plan to balance the budget, grow the economy and create jobs. Ontarians will continue to see measurable results, as already seen around the world from those who value the work that we've done here in Ontario.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakubuski: My question is to the Minister of Energy. The minister will know that hydro rates went up again yesterday; on May 1, hydro rates went up. The latest line—an unbelievable line—from the government is that the increases are due to the fact that people didn't use enough electricity. So in this Liberal energy system, people are penalized when it's a cold winter, they are penalized when it's a warm winter and they are punished even more when they conserve electricity.

Will the minister finally admit that the people's skyrocketing energy rates are not a result of weather but of the colossal mismanagement of Ontario's electricity system under his guidance, and will he commit to a real plan to stop abusing Ontarians with skyrocketing hydro rates?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, the member is correct that there was a 2.5% increase. And as I said last week and the week before, the member ignores the fact that if you look at comparisons to other provinces—BC Hydro rates increased by 4% on April 1, 2016; SaskPower approved an increase of 5% throughout 2015; Manitoba Hydro applied for a rate increase of 3.95% as of April 1, 2016; and Newfoundland Power applied for a rate increase of 3.6% for residential customers as of July 1, 2016.

As I said earlier today, northern Ontario has the third-lowest industrial rates in North America.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakubuski: The minister has to stop with the numbers game. Quebec's hydro rates could go up 300%, and they'd still be lower than ours. Stop with the

numbers game. You are inflicting real pain on Ontario families.

I had a gentleman in my constituency office on Friday who said that this hydro fiasco that you've created is tearing families apart. I spoke to a woman yesterday in my constituency office who works at a food bank in Eganville. She said that there was a 30% increase at the food bank. They ran out. When you talk to people and ask them why they're at the food bank, it's because they have to make a choice: "If we pay our hydro bill, we can't afford food." That's what you've done here in the province of Ontario.

Will you show some compassion and stop going down the disastrous road that you've built for Ontario families?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member knows that we've created a number of significant programs to help consumers, including removal of the debt retirement charge at the beginning of the year. We've created the Ontario Electricity Support Program for low- and modest-income families, which would save them an additional \$360 per year off their bills, or \$430 when combined with the removal of the debt retirement charge.

I do want to thank the Conservative Party again for supporting our nuclear refurbishment program, which sees an average price of 7.7 cents per kilowatt hour over the next 30 years—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Some people here have Ws.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Conservative Party for supporting our initiative in nuclear refurbishment, which shows 7.7 cents per kilowatt hour, on average, over the next 30 years, and that is clean energy.

We're taking a lot of other steps to reduce the cost of electricity, including the new price of wind—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, you will note—because I'm sure your staff watches this—that about a week ago, there was a 26-cent-a-litre difference in the price of gas from southern to northern Ontario, and within northern Ontario, there was a 10-cent-a-litre difference between Kirkland Lake and Timmins.

The question is very simple: When is this minister and this government going to get on side and do what we've been asking and what municipalities across the north have been asking; that is, either get these gas companies to stop gouging the public or, if not, regulate the price of gas?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking the member opposite for the question. I'm happy to take

that one back and have a conversation with the member offline.

Of course, you would know that cutting across all of the activity that this government does—thanks not only to the Premier but, of course, to members like the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry and, also, the member from Sudbury—this is a government that, for 13 years, has worked very hard in a determined fashion to make sure that northern Ontarians have a bright and prosperous future, and that the quality of life for northern Ontarians continues to improve, including, of course, in budget 2016; for example, a number of initiatives from the Ministry of Transportation on the infrastructure front to support highway expansion, roads, bridges and so much more for all of northern Ontario.

For 13 years, thanks to this Ontario Liberal government, we have moved the yardsticks forward for northern Ontario. Because of our leadership, unlike the NDP, we'll continue to get the job done.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As my colleague was just saying, we've gone from question period to comedy hour.

This government is the same government who got rid of the Ontario Northland, the only train that we have in northern Ontario. This is a government who has driven the price of electricity through the roof to the point that residents and industry can't afford it. And now I'm asking him a question about the price of gas.

How could it be that gas companies are able to charge a 26-cents-per-litre difference for gasoline across this province? If you can sell a case of beer in Kenora for the same price you sell it for in downtown Toronto, how is it that you're going to have a 26-cents-a-litre difference on the price of gas?

I ask you again: Are you prepared to step in, get these guys under control and, if not, regulate them?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I think the member knows that the regulation of the price of gasoline is a federal responsibility under the Competition Act, Mr. Speaker. He's talking about a differential in price. Does he want the same price? Does he want price control? If he wants price control, tell him he wants price control, okay? We know what happens when you have price control.

The provinces who have tried to regulate have seen the prices stay the same as the other provinces, or they went up, because of the cost of administering the price control they're trying to implement.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. We all know that sexual violence has a devastating impact on the lives of survivors and their families. As a

member of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment, I heard many touching personal accounts of this kind of violence. It was clear to me that we as a province need to do more to eliminate sexual violence and harassment right across Ontario. But because crimes of sexual violence and harassment are the most unreported in our province, it is imperative that we improve the experience of survivors who come forward to report these crimes, through better tools and training for our police and law enforcement officials.

Minister, I was pleased to join you in Ottawa in February when you announced the funding of six research projects at post-secondary institutions across the province, dedicated to improving how police respond. Through you to the minister, Mr. Speaker, would the minister please explain how he is addressing this very real and pressing gap?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member from Ottawa-Orléans for her work, along with the other members on the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment.

Sexual violence and harassment is something that is far too prevalent in our communities and something that cannot be tolerated. That is why I was very happy to join the member from Ottawa-Orléans in February to announce that we are investing \$375,000 to support six research projects at post-secondary institutions across the province, to provide our police and law enforcement officials with the tools and training they need in order to best support survivors of these terrible crimes.

This research is about identifying best practices based on evidence. It is about supporting an even more compassionate and sensitive approach from law enforcement. It is about learning and implementing best practices, to encourage more survivors to report sexual violence and to continue to improve how police respond to and investigate cases of sexual violence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer.

I am glad to hear that you're taking concrete steps to better support survivors of sexual violence and harassment, and improve training for the police who respond to these crimes.

While this research will be important in addressing these issues, we must also recognize that indigenous women are disproportionately more likely to experience violence; in fact, they are three times as likely compared to other women in Canada. Our First Nations partners have told us that there has always been a gap in the justice system, so as we move forward to eliminate sexual violence from our communities, we cannot lose sight of the indigenous women who need our help the most. That means that we must work to develop a more compassionate, sensitive and culturally appropriate response for law enforcement when dealing with sexual violence against indigenous women, while encouraging more survivors to report.

Mr. Speaker, through you, would the minister please explain what our government is doing to identify the gaps

in best practices to help indigenous women across Ontario?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It is unfortunate that indigenous women are disproportionately likely to experience violence. As the member stated, in fact, they are three times as likely to be impacted by it compared to other women in Canada.

This must change. That is why last month, along with the minister responsible for women's issues and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I announced that we're providing over \$250,000 to support research that will specifically draw on the lived experiences of indigenous survivors of sexual violence. These research projects will build on Walking Together: Ontario's Long-Term Strategy to End Violence Against Indigenous Women and our It's Never Okay action plan. They will examine how police respond to and investigate these crimes. It is my hope that this research will show us how to improve supports and empower indigenous survivors.

Speaker, this is how our government is working to identify the gaps and best practices, so we can develop tools to improve police responses and investigations to help indigenous women across the province.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is for the Minister of Education. This government promised to improve the quality of education in the classroom, but it isn't happening. It's clear that ever since the Liberals fast-tracked the reviews of school closings to 10 weeks from seven months, communities are literally being torn apart.

In my riding, five schools are closing. OSCVI alumni, parents and students have appealed to the minister to step in and review the decision—a call that's supported by over 2,100 petitioners. Mr. Speaker, these constituents want to know: Will the minister support a one-year moratorium on the decision and allow the community, the students and all stakeholder groups to consult on the proposal to close OSCVI?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm quite happy to comment on Bluewater District School Board, which is what the issue is about. Actually, we had a really interesting event on Friday in Meaford, where the Bluewater board had in fact used the new expedited ARC process. As a result of that expedited ARC process, they will be closing two of their existing elementary schools. They will be closing an older high school as well.

We actually announced that they will be receiving \$24 million in the small community of Meaford in order to build a new 1,000-student JK-to-12 school to consolidate all three of those schools. The community, including the mayor, was absolutely delighted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's unfortunate that the minister didn't have the decency to invite the representative of that riding to that announcement.

Despite promising to address the funding formula in the past two elections, it appears the minister is indiffer-

ent to the predicament they're creating and the impact of school closures on people and their communities. This attitude runs parallel to their waste and mismanagement pattern, the same one that has led the government to cut back on funding essential public services, such as education and health care.

Minister, you control the purse strings. You set the rules of the funding formula. You said you would change it. A busload of constituents will be arriving any minute and they want assurances from you that you'll do the right thing.

Mr. Speaker, I ask again through you: Will the minister agree to a review of this decision to ensure that students' best interests are served at the end of the day by this government? It's not about the Meaford school; it's about the OSCVI school.

Hon. Liz Sandals: As I commented to the reporters from Owen Sound on Friday, we need to sort out the process here. Actually, under the Education Act, it falls within the jurisdiction of school boards—not the Minister of Education—to make decisions about accommodation reviews. In fact, the boards are charged with that responsibility.

I would like to point out that I am the Minister of Education, not the minister of schools. My primary focus is to make sure that students receive good programming. What we know in secondary schools is that when there's a critical mass of students, the board has the opportunity to provide a broader breadth of programs for the students. They can provide better-quality programming. That actually is my job: to make sure students receive—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Throughout their history, TTC fares in Toronto have been based on the simple principle that every Torontonian deserves equal access to their transit system, regardless of their income and regardless of where they live. But now Metrolinx is quietly working on a fare integration plan that could force people living in Scarborough, Etobicoke and North York to pay a higher fare for a subway ride than people living downtown.

Will the Liberal government guarantee that Metrolinx will not force people living in Scarborough to pay more to ride the subway?

1130

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the leader of the NDP for the question. Of course, as everyone should know by now, the folks at Metrolinx, who are doing an exceptional job, are working hard to liaise with all of our municipal transit systems around the greater Toronto and Hamilton area to make sure that, collectively, we can deliver on fare integration for this region.

I think anyone who moves around the greater Toronto and Hamilton area would recognize—and certainly I hear

it loud and clear from my own constituents in York region—in order to support the unprecedented transit investments that this government is making, that we need a fare integration system across this entire region that works seamlessly, that makes transit more accessible, more affordable, more reliable and more dependable for the people of the entire region. That's the work that Metrolinx is embarking upon, in conjunction with all of our municipal transit systems. They will keep working hard to make sure that we can get it right.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, in fact, what Metrolinx has been quietly doing is designing a fare integration plan that could force the TTC to become a zone-based system that divides Torontonians based on where they live. So years from now, people in Scarborough might get a new subway but then find out that they can only afford to ride the bus.

Will the Liberal government guarantee that there will be no fare zones within Toronto, and that Metrolinx will not force the TTC to charge higher fares for subway riders?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Only the leader of Ontario's NDP would think somehow that after months of open conversations, after months in which every single board meeting has a public portion, that this is somehow hidden. It's a conversation that's been ongoing. It's part of my mandate letter, which, of course, she should know. For the first time in Ontario's history, our mandate letters were posted publicly at the time that we received them.

I think what's also, perhaps, the reason that the leader of the NDP is mistaken about how supposedly hidden this effort is is that because—while we are investing in transit through budget after budget after budget, that leader and the NDP caucus continue to vote against them. They are obviously more focused on petty partisan politics in Scarborough instead of being focused on making sure that they support the transit investments needed to deliver the seamless integrated transit network the people of this region and the people of Scarborough deserve.

DENTAL CARE

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Tooth decay is one of the most prevalent yet preventable chronic diseases, particularly among children. It is the leading cause of day surgeries for those ages one to five. Research shows that untreated oral health problems can affect children's ability to eat, sleep and focus. In my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, it is not unusual to see children whose growth and development are impacted by poor oral health.

There is an unacceptable disparity in health outcomes between lower- and higher-income individuals in this province. It is true of dental health as well.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: Can he please inform the House what the government is doing to ensure that children in my

riding of Scarborough—Agincourt and across Ontario receive the proper dental care they deserve?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I have to say that it was great being with the member from Scarborough—Agincourt, and many of her MPP colleagues from Durham and Scarborough, last week when we announced a \$20-million investment in diagnostic imaging at the Scarborough Hospital, and a \$5-million planning grant, as well, for both Durham and Scarborough regions.

As the Minister of Health and as a parent, I want to see all children grow up to be healthy and live healthy lives. The family income level should not be a barrier to that. That's why I was pleased last week to announce that our government is supporting families in raising healthy kids by making it easier for more eligible children and youth from low-income families to access free dental health services in Ontario.

The new Healthy Smiles Ontario program provides access to free preventive, routine and emergency dental services for all eligible children and youth. I'm very proud of our government's Healthy Smiles program. It's an important step in Ontario's overall Poverty Reduction Strategy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you to the minister for his response and also for his leadership role in supporting Scarborough.

Healthy Smiles is an excellent oral health program run by the public health units across Ontario. We know this type of preventive treatment, whether it's checkups, cleaning, fillings or X-rays, saves our health care system dollars in the long run.

Studies show that early detection and identification of oral diseases are critical in children's overall health, social well-being and learning.

As a former public health nurse and school board trustee, I know the free Healthy Smiles dental health care program will help children in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt and across Ontario improve their oral health, keep them out of the emergency room, ensure proper nutrition, promote self-esteem and reduce absenteeism from school.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please tell the House how families can access the Healthy Smiles program?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As part of this new and improved program—where we merged six different programs with different sets of rules and six different applications into one program with one application and one set of rules—70,000 more kids will have access to these important services.

I'm pleased to report back today that already more than 323,000 young people are enrolled in the Healthy Smiles program. To bring that number even higher, we launched an awareness campaign last week across the province to encourage more people to visit ontario.ca/healthysmiles to find out if their kids are eligible, and to sign them up for these important publicly funded dental services. Families can also speak to their local public health unit.

Of course, our public health units are essential partners, and I want to thank them and our other partners, including our dentists, as we roll out this important program.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we go to new questions, just to remind the member from Windsor West, it really doesn't matter where you sit.

The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

DIABETES

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. A recent Toronto Sun article detailed this government's failures for patients with diabetes. This particular patient had to have her left foot amputated and came close to having to amputate her other foot due to a lack of preventive foot care.

A 2012 report released by Canada's Premiers revealed that an estimated 85% of leg amputations are the result of a non-healing foot ulcer. The report recommended the use of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario's best practices guide to prevent the need for amputation, but four years later about 2,000 patients are forced to undergo physically and emotionally traumatic amputations each year.

Mr. Speaker, why has the minister failed to implement RNAO's preventive measures, which could save millions of dollars and thousands of limbs of Ontario's diabetic patients?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I have to commend RNAO and the Canadian Association of Wound Care, both of whom are participating in a Health Quality Ontario task force, a working group that I asked HQO to set up to look specifically at these issues. We're hearing from the best experts right across this country on this important issue.

The level of amputation that we're seeing is unacceptable. It's important that we have a wound care approach that is based on best practices and best principles, and that that is applied province-wide.

We've gathered together the experts—of course, RNAO and the Canadian Association of Wound Care are part of that process—so we can actually hear from them, work with them in this working group to develop those standards of care and implement them across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Minister of Health: That task force should have been called four years ago, after the Premiers' report came out, not four years later, with patients suffering for four continued years.

The Canadian Diabetes Association reported that the economic burden of diabetes was estimated to be \$4.9 billion in 2010 and is expected to increase to \$6.9 billion by 2020. An estimated 1.5 million people in Ontario have diabetes, and that's expected to grow to 2.3 million people by 2025. These Ontarians are 12 times more likely to be hospitalized with end-stage renal disease and 20 times more likely to be hospitalized for a lower-limb amputation than the general public.

Could the minister explain why prevention is not a priority in this government?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Of course it's a priority, and that's why we're looking at wound care. We're also looking at off-loading, which is an important aspect of this in terms of prevention and best practices for management.

I need to remind the member opposite that Ontario was the first province or territory in Canada to fully fund insulin pumps for children and adults with type 1 diabetes.

We've established six centres for complex diabetes care. They have provided care to over 9,000 new patients. We've increased the number of diabetes education teams, which I suspect the member opposite would agree is a preventive aspect of care. We now have 321 diabetes education teams across the province. We have diabetes mobile outreach services. And we've invested in self-management, as well, making sure that individuals like my sister, who has type 1 diabetes, have the education and support that they need to be able to live those high-quality lives.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Last week, we learned that the Ontario government recovered nearly \$140,000 in wages owed by 18 firms to interns, after a ministry blitz of a small number of GTA workplaces. The results of the blitz are deeply troubling. Of the 36 firms with interns that were subject to the Employment Standards Act, fully half were not meeting their obligations under the ESA.

It seems that the minister's efforts to educate employers are not working. While the blitz stopped the exploitation of unpaid interns at 18 firms, what is the minister doing to prevent the thousands of other young people who are working without pay at hundreds more firms across this province?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for this important question. Contrary to the assertions that are made by the member, I would say the work we are doing on unpaid internships in this province is working. Thanks to the work that we were able to do with the Ministry of Labour in the blitz, young people in this province will now be receiving \$140,000 that they wouldn't have otherwise received.

Let me make it perfectly clear: Unpaid internships are illegal in the province of Ontario. There is no such thing as a legal unpaid internship. If there are employers out there today—and the blitz shows us there are—that still do not understand or decide not to follow the rules, we are going to continue to level that playing field for other employers in this province that do abide by the rules. I'm proud we were able to recover the money for these young people, who deserve that money.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener–Conestoga on a point of order.

Mr. Michael Harris: Point of order. I would like to welcome Pathfinder Christian School to question period today. Thanks, guys, for coming.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Barrie on a point of order.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'd like to wish a very happy birthday to the member from Brampton–Springdale, who celebrated her birthday on April 27.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Timmins–James Bay has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Transportation concerning gas prices. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bill Walker: I did this earlier, but now the group from Owen Sound, OSCVI, are here: students, alumni and some very dedicated people from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to welcome Josie Swan-Merrison, the mother of page Preston.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'd like to introduce to the House Kelly Fairchild, a constituent who is here today for a petition I'm reading. We also have Pamela Taschuk, Derek Richmond, Megan Whitfield and Stacey Mills, who are members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and are concerned that they are being asked to deliver objectionable material.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: First of all, I didn't realize that sitting down would cause so much delay in the proceedings—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Don't make me warn you.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I would like to introduce and welcome Laura and Steve Donkers, who came from Oxford today to hear a statement I'll be making later in members' statements. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: "Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives must die, / Passing through nature to eternity."

Today I rise to mark the 400th anniversary of the passing of one of the greatest playwrights, William Shakespeare. The Bard of Avon is best known for his collection of around 40 plays. To this day, they are some of the most commonly performed plays.

Shakespeare was born around April 23, 1564, and led a life as an actor and writer. I'm sure that everyone in this House has studied his plays, which is a testament to the power of his work. It's believed that Shakespeare passed away around April 23, 1616, though no record of his death exists. We do know that his funeral was on April 25, 1616. Shakespeare was a man of wealth and fame during his lifetime, but has become revered since his death.

My riding of Perth–Wellington is home to one of the prominent arts festivals, the Stratford Festival. The Stratford Festival is internationally renowned for its productions, many of which are Shakespearean plays. Four hundred years after his death, audiences flock to Stratford to watch Shakespeare's work come to life.

The festival is a centre of economic activity in Stratford. A 2010 Conference Board of Canada study found that the festival generates economic activity of \$139 million, tax revenue of \$75 million and 2,957 full-time jobs.

I invite everyone to visit Stratford this summer and celebrate Shakespeare's legacy with a performance of Macbeth, As You Like It, or Breath of Kings.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Jennifer K. French: We Are Oshawa is a group of community activists and advocates who engage community members on important issues. Recently, they organized a \$15 and Fairness rally and created a clever obstacle course in my constituency office parking lot called the Amazing Race to the Bottom. I'll tell you: I'm always up for a challenge, but the Amazing Race to the Bottom is not one that people win.

It started with the Childcare Juggle, and it turns that I'm not any good at juggling. I had to run the Race to Pay the Rent, but kept running into Sick Day Setbacks. When it came to the Unpaid Bills Balancing Act and the Unpaid Internship Wobble, I barely managed to get by and just made it over the Student Debt High Jump. It got really tricky when I had to lift and carry the weight of the Necessities of Life and had to figure out what is most important: food, rent or paying my bills.

While I ran the race, Mr. Moneybags shouted unhelpful encouragement at me like, "Try harder!" "Pull yourself up by your bootstraps!" and "Change your attitude; change your life!"

I finished the Amazing Race to the Bottom and crossed the poverty line, but nobody won. In real life, these obstacles aren't fun; they are heartbreaking and insurmountable.

New Democrats support a \$15-an-hour minimum wage. Hard-working Ontarians deserve to earn a fair living wage for their time and their work. They deserve

benefits, sick leave and strong services in a fair society where they are not forced to race to the bottom but instead can set their sights on a bright future for themselves and for their children.

COMMUNITY BEAUTIFICATION

Mr. Han Dong: I rise today to recognize some outstanding community partners in my riding of Trinity–Spadina.

Over the last week, organizations across Trinity–Spadina have stepped up to the task when it comes to cleaning up communities and environmental protection. Beginning on Earth Day, April 22, residents of Trinity–Spadina began cleaning and beautifying our neighbourhoods and the community. Thanks to community leaders like Scadding Court, the entertainment district BIA, the CityPlace Residents' Association, and the litter and glitter committee of the Annex Residents' Association, just to name a few, Trinity–Spadina is ready for the summer.

I am very proud to have so many amazing organizations in my community. I would especially like to recognize and thank the volunteers who came out to these community clean-ups. It is their dedication and commitment to our and our children's community and environment that is truly inspiring.

I, along with the rest of my riding, am extremely proud of the organizations and volunteers for their hard work. I know, honestly, it's taking place across this province. I want to say to them: Thank you for helping to make Trinity–Spadina a beautiful place to live and raise a family.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Every child in Ontario deserves an opportunity to succeed. No parent should have to hear that the government has given up on their child, but that's what parents like Laura Donkers have been told. Her son Lawson is six and has autism. After only four months of intensive behaviour therapy this spring, they received a letter saying that he was being transitioned out. As his mother said, "I waited six years for him to call me Mom. Do you know what it's like to wonder if your child knows who you are and your name? I do. Now Kathleen wants to take that away from us. That's not right."

Mr. Speaker, it is not right. The government should not be giving up on children just because they are six years old, especially those who have spent years on the wait-list.

He was six when he started IBI, but already Lawson has learned to wash his hands, how to dress and is learning how to use the toilet. Imagine how much he could learn in the two years of therapy his parents were promised. Instead, the government has chosen to cut off services for kids like Lawson just because of their age.

The need for help doesn't stop at six. These children deserve a chance for the future. I'm asking the government to give Lawson and all children like him a chance. Give them the IBI therapy that they need. As Laura Donkers said, "Please don't let Kathleen Wynne leave behind a generation of children."

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I rise today to draw attention to a serious issue in the municipality of French River in the south end of my riding. Three years ago, the ministry area maintenance contractor was replacing a culvert on Highway 64. They inadvertently put up signage to detour traffic onto Golf Course Road rather than Highway 607, as they had intended. This mistake happened during half-load season. According to the engineers, this mistake by the MTO contractor caused \$344,000 in damage to Golf Course Road.

For the last three years, representatives from the French River area have reached out repeatedly to the Ministry of Transportation on this issue, to no avail. When they are not ignored, they are offered a measly sum of \$25,000. That's seven cents on the dollar. The ministry itself has stated, "A review of the detour configuration did identify irregularities in our half-load signage on Highway 607."

After three years, Golf Course Road is still not fixed and is getting worse. The good people of French River, all 2,500 of them, are stuck with this large bill for a mistake made by the Ministry of Transportation.

When will the ministry take its responsibility and pay for the damage done to Golf Course Road? Construction season is upon us. Time is of the essence.

CRAFT BREWERIES

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: The craft beverage industry in Northumberland–Quinte West is thriving. The beverage producers of Northumberland county believe strongly in community and in the fellowship of the industry. They are unique, Speaker, in their co-operative nature.

1310

On Wednesday of last week some of the brewers, cideries, hop growers and maltsters of the region came together in a collaborative effort to create a truly local beer while celebrating a spirit of unity. Participants held a kickoff event at the William Street Beer Co. in Cobourg to start production of a truly local beer, made by local professionals, using entirely local ingredients. In fact, this beer will be fully comprised of ingredients grown within 75 kilometres of the brewery. This includes local barley, hops, apples and honey. Contributors include Church-Key Brewery of Campbellford, Empire Cider of Codrington, William Street Beer Co. of Cobourg, Bickle Farm-Valley Hops of Port Hope, Barn Owl Malt of Stirling, and Pleasant Valley Hops of Hillier. Speaker, this unique brew should be ready in about four weeks.

I'm extremely proud of these folks and the initiative they have taken to promote the use of local ingredients. It is a wonderful idea, and I encourage growth, sustainability and reinvestment in the local economy. Perhaps one day it may be chosen as the official craft beer of the Legislature, Speaker. But until then I encourage all members to stop in to any local participating breweries in Northumberland.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise today to bring attention to school closures in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. The Bluewater District School Board has recently completed an accommodation review, during which parents and community partners were asked to comment on upgrading two Owen Sound high schools to a grade 7-12. I'd like to also add that this review was done under the government's new fast-track rule, where the process was shortened to 10 weeks from the previous seven months. The outcome is concerning to many people in the community.

Two weeks after the comment period ended, the board surprised the parents and student of OSCVI by announcing that it would close their 16-year-old school and move all high school students into the 57-year-old West Hill high school, putting that school at overcapacity. The board plans to renovate the OSCVI to create an elementary super school with more than 1,000 students. The city of Owen Sound and the county of Grey, together with the OSCVI alumni, students and their parents, have made a plea to the Minister of Education to step in and review the process, provide a one-year moratorium on the decision, and allow the community and students and stakeholders to consult on the proposal to close OSCVI. To this end they've gathered 2,100 signatures on a petition which I hope to present today. For reference, that's about 10% of the population of the city of Owen Sound.

This is a very contentious and divisive issue that is literally tearing our communities apart. The people are feeling devastated by what's transpired. I trust that this government is paying attention to the impact of forcing boards to fast-track school closures due to reduced funding as a result of their waste and mismanagement of the province's finances. I also trust they will take this opportunity to review funding formulas that do not work in rural Ontario. Our students deserve better.

DOCTORS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I have the privilege to recognize an extraordinary group of men and women serving the province of Ontario, and that is, of course, Ontario's medical doctors. May 1 is declared to be Doctors' Day in Ontario. I recognize my colleague the MPP for Richmond Hill, the Honourable Reza Moridi, for bringing this forward. It was his private member's bill in 2011 that proclaimed this.

Speaker, since 2003 the number of physicians in Ontario has increased by over 5,600, or 26.3%. During the same time the population grew by 10.6%. This means that because of our investments the ratio of physicians for every 10,000 Ontarians increased from 17.5 to 20. Our government is committed to making sure the people of Ontario have the right care at the right time in the right place. We have moved forward on a number of initiatives that ensure a stable physician supply, improve retention and enhance the distribution of physicians across Ontario.

As a physician parliamentarian myself, as well as parliamentary assistant to the Premier, I'm of course proud to be part of the world-class health care system that we have established right here in Ontario. I would particularly, with your permission, Speaker, like to recognize an inspiring physician who I know is watching right now: Dr. Qaadri the elder. Dr. Mussarrat Qaadri has been practising as an obstetrician and gynaecologist in the province of Ontario for the last 45 years. Thank you, mom. She has also, by the way, chaired a meeting at the Ontario Medical Association of the section of clinical hypnosis medical interest group.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Yvan Baker: Today I rise to speak to an important issue in my riding of Etobicoke Centre, as well as across Ontario. Every month I hold a seniors advisory group meeting. At these meetings I hear about the many issues that impact seniors. One of the issues that I hear about the most is the issue of door-to-door sales. Through speaking with my constituents I learned that Ontarians, particularly vulnerable individuals such as seniors, continue to receive unwanted sales offers at their doors. These marketers often use misleading and aggressive high-pressure sales tactics to entice people into contracts that take advantage of consumers. Under the guise of saving consumers money, many dishonest salespeople dupe consumers into contracts that are more expensive than the industry standards, have harsh cancellation fees, and provide inferior products and services that don't work or that don't perform as advertised.

While this is an issue that cuts across all ages, it's alarming to me to see how often door-to-door sellers target those who may be more vulnerable. That is why today I will be introducing a private member's bill. The bill being tabled today is the culmination of months of consultation and research within my riding and with province-wide stakeholders.

If passed, the bill will ban the sale, lease or rent of air conditioners, water heaters, furnaces and water treatment devices. It would also allow the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services to add more products to the list, if necessary.

I have heard from too many seniors and concerned constituents who have been taken advantage of by coercive and misleading salespeople, right on their own doorsteps, right in their own home. It is beyond repre-

hensible that some organizations have a business that makes money taking advantage of vulnerable people. We must take action to protect Ontarians and end this predatory practice.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

DOOR-TO-DOOR SALES PROHIBITION ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 INTERDISANT LA VENTE DE PORTE-À-PORTE

Mr. Baker moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 193, An Act to prohibit door-to-door sales of certain products / Projet de loi 193, Loi interdisant la vente de porte-à-porte de certains produits.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Did I hear—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, I wasn't sure. Thank you. Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Yvan Baker: This bill, if passed, Speaker, would protect consumers from misleading, aggressive and coercive tactics from door-to-door salespeople. If passed, the bill will ban the sale, lease or rent of air conditioners, water heaters, furnaces and water treatment devices. It would also allow the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services to add more products to the list, if necessary. Significant fines would be instituted on those individuals and companies contravening the act.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(b), the following changes be made to the ballot list: Mr. Hudak and Mr. Walker exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Hudak assumes ballot item number 42 and Mr. Walker assumes ballot item number 36.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98(b), the following changes be made to the ballot list: that Mr. Hudak and Mr. Walker exchange places in order—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense. Agreed? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EDUCATION WEEK

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to stand in the House today to celebrate Education Week in Ontario.

Ontario has one of the best education systems in the world, and I'm proud to say this is because of the dedication, passion and commitment of Ontario's education community. I want to thank everyone who is working to support Ontario's students, including the educators, staff administrators, trustees and, of course, the parents.

1320

Education Week is our chance to shine a light on all of these deserving people who work tirelessly each and every day in our school communities. To these outstanding individuals, I extend my sincerest gratitude for all that you do.

This is also an opportunity, Speaker, for us to build on our renewed vision for education by highlighting one of our top priorities. This year, our theme for Education Week is "Achieving Excellence: Promoting Well-Being." Well-being is a positive sense of self, spirit and belonging that we feel when our cognitive, emotional, social and physical needs are being met. Over the past decade, we have seen growing evidence demonstrating why well-being is an important element of overall student success.

Ontario is committed to helping our children and students build the knowledge and skills associated with positive well-being so they can become confident, capable and caring citizens. We know that positive well-being has been achieved when all of the children and students in our care have enhanced mental and physical health, a positive sense of self and belonging, and the skills to make positive choices.

Promoting well-being is also about fostering learning environments that encourage healthy students, and engaged and dedicated educators, parents and staff. We know that educators and staff who are motivated and proud to come to work every day are a critical component of enhanced student achievement and well-being. We want all of our students, educators and staff to feel that their well-being is being supported and that they are being given the best chance to reach their full potential.

We're not stopping here. Ontario has a lot to be proud of in terms of student achievement. We know that well-being and achievement are linked and that the overall well-being of our children and students contributes to their ability to learn in all disciplines—including math. We know that we have more work to do in the area of math. That is why, beginning in the 2016-17 school year, Ontario is implementing a renewed math strategy. This

comprehensive strategy is designed to better support our students, our teachers, our schools and our boards in advancing achievement in math. This strategy will provide new forms of support to all schools, with increased support to some schools and intensive support to schools with the greatest needs in math.

We will also be giving parents more resources to support their children's learning at home. This is something I will often hear about from parents: "How do I help my kids at home with their math?" We will be encouraging and supporting better access to online resources and math supports, such as Homework Help and SOS Devoirs.

The strategy also draws on what we know about culturally responsive teaching and learning so that we can support all of Ontario's diverse children and students, including French-language students and First Nation, Métis and Inuit students. Speaker, it is our shared responsibility to support student success and well-being. We strive to do this while always being mindful of our renewed vision for education, which includes these goals along with ensuring equity and enhancing public confidence. All students, from their earliest years into adulthood, have the right to a brighter future, and they all deserve the opportunity to succeed and pursue their lifelong dreams. We will never stop working towards these goals.

Speaker, as we celebrate Education Week and our theme of promoting well-being, I want to extend my best wishes to all of my fellow members and to each and every person in the province who works to make Ontario's publicly funded education system one of the best in the world.

FIRST RESPONDERS DAY

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It is my great honour to speak about First Responders Day. Speaker, before I do that, I want to welcome some very good friends who are in the members' gallery: Carmen Santoro and Ernie Thorne of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association; John Blair, Damien Walsh, Ken Webb and Steve Buckingham from the Toronto Professional Fire Fighters' Association; Claudette Holloway, Shirley Kennedy and Searle Schonewille from the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario; Theresa Agnew from the Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario; and Bruce Chapman and Stephen Reid from the Police Association of Ontario. I want to welcome them all today in the House for this moment on First Responders Day.

Every day, Ontario's first responders put their lives on the line to protect us, our friends, neighbours, communities and loved ones. They provide emergency and often life-saving services when we need them most and look after us in our time of need. We're able to take comfort and rest easy in knowing that Ontario's first responders are ready at a moment's notice to protect our homes, businesses and communities.

To recognize the ongoing commitment to community safety, the Ontario Legislature proclaimed May 1 of each

year as First Responders Day. It is my great privilege to rise in this House to recognize and express our eternal gratitude on behalf of our Premier, our government and the people of Ontario to our first responders. This includes police officers, firefighters, military personnel, paramedics, medical evacuation pilots, dispatchers, nurses, doctors and emergency managers. It also includes the many volunteers and professionals who dedicate their careers to the service of others. Those we honour here today put themselves in danger so the rest of us can live safely. We hold them up as heroes because that is what they are.

We know that being a first responder is more than a job. It is even more than a career. It is truly a calling. It takes a special person to run into a dangerous situation when everyone is running the other way, to put themselves in harm's way to save a total stranger, and to be the one others turn to in their desperate moments. Emergency service providers are important members of our communities. They are also our neighbours, relatives and, of course, friends. Whether they are on the other end of the line when someone calls 911, or save a heart attack victim, or put their lives on the line in defence of our country, these men and women bring professionalism, calm and a helping hand in the greatest hour of need. Answering the call to keep the rest of us safe is not just something they do; it is a reflection of who they are.

We also know that what they're exposed to, frankly, are circumstances and situations that none of us should ever see or experience and that can take a physical, mental and emotional toll. We have seen the devastating and far-reaching impacts of PTSD. I'm extremely proud that our government recently passed the Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act to ensure that they get the comprehensive supports they need to prevent, diagnose and support their recovery. This is absolutely the right thing to do because first responders are always there when we need them, and it is only right that we do the same for them.

As the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, I think it is also extremely important to recognize each and every police officer, firefighter, and correctional services staff who play a key role in keeping our communities safe. I'm pleased that correctional officers and other front-line staff in our institutions are included in this bill.

Our government also recognizes probation and parole officers, nurses and other professionals who work each and every day to help those in need and keep our communities safe. These groups face unique stresses in their service to Ontarians. I want to be clear that our government will continue this conversation with them. We will build on and enhance programs to ensure that they have the supports that they need and deserve.

We know that Ontario families and communities are safer thanks to the dedication of our first responders, who are there to help us when we need them most. I also want to recognize the sacrifice of their families, their partners, their mothers and fathers, and their children. Thank you for sharing your loved ones with us.

We must take the opportunity to pay our respects to those who have lost their lives. Working with firefighters, police and correctional officers, we have created an annual tribute to honour those who have given their lives in the line of duty.

1330

Yesterday I was honoured and humbled to join our Premier at the Ontario Police Memorial Foundation's annual ceremony of remembrance at Queen's Park right here in Toronto.

In addition, I also had the opportunity and the honour of attending the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs memorial service for fallen chief officers. The names of these fallen officers are inscribed on the wall of honour—in the case of police officers—right here at Queen's Park and in a memory book in the case of fallen chief officers. Let's all take a moment to reflect on their courage, dedication and sacrifice.

Heroes are defined by the way they live their lives in service to their communities and protecting those in harm's way. To the families of those who have given their lives to protect others, we owe you an eternal debt and we keep the memory of your loved ones in our hearts and minds so that they may be never forgotten.

Ontarians are privileged to be protected by our first responders. We are grateful for their dedication, for their public service and for their commitment to duty and service. To our friends here in gallery today, I want to extend enhanced gratitude to all the family members of first responders through them. Please, let them know that we thank them, we respect them and we owe them a huge gratitude for the service they perform in our communities across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's time for responses.

EDUCATION WEEK

Mr. Patrick Brown: It is my pleasure to rise today on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and recognize Education Week. Every year, the first full week of May is used to mark Education Week, providing an opportunity to honour the excellent work of principals, teachers, support staff, administrators and school boards who nurture the minds of our children and young adults who are at the centre of Ontario's future success.

I assumed the role of the Ontario PC education critic because I learned from my mother at an early age the dedication and hard work that goes into the vocation of teaching. I often witnessed endless hours of marking and prepping for her classes. She encouraged her students to do their best and learn everything they could not just from books but important life skills as well.

Ontario's educators love their students and they work extremely hard on their behalf. I'd like to thank our principals, teachers, support staff, administrators and school boards for the excellent work that happens in our schools each and every day and for their ongoing commitment to putting students first.

I fervently believe that the choices that we make in how we educate our children and young adults are at the centre of Ontario's resurgence as the economic powerhouse of our nation. It is of the utmost importance that we support Ontario's educators so that they have the resources to equip our children with fundamental numeracy and literacy skills to succeed in a competitive global economy. When we invest in young minds, it pays dividends to society.

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I want to applaud all those who spur student achievement and acknowledge the important role that our educators play in building our society. I encourage all members of the Legislature and all Ontarians to thank someone in the education community for the knowledge they convey to Ontario's children and for everything they bring to our schools.

As a son of a former principal, I wish to extend a sincere thank you to all the dedicated teachers, principals and support staff who work in the education sector. Thank you, and happy Education Week.

FIRST RESPONDERS DAY

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Every day, our first responders work tirelessly to protect all of us both in plain sight as well as behind the scenes. Through the hard work of my former colleague Frank Klees, the former member from Newmarket-Aurora and a true champion for first responders, May 1 was designated as First Responders Day in Ontario.

I'm proud to stand today as the PC caucus community safety and correctional services critic and build on that history of commitment to Ontario's first responders.

Yesterday, our PC leader, Patrick Brown, and I were honoured to attend the Ontario Police Memorial Foundation's annual ceremony of remembrance at Queen's Park as we collectively paid tribute to the brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their communities. I was especially honoured as Chatham police officer William Lorenzo Pickard, who died in the line of duty in 1922, was recognized at that ceremony.

The ceremony also celebrates the ongoing commitment of first responders who are heroes in life. I was also very pleased to have spent some time with the president of the Police Association of Ontario, Mr. Bruce Chapman.

First responders include police officers, firefighters, military personnel, paramedics, medical evaluation pilots, dispatchers, nurses, doctors and emergency managers. It's important to note that those people working in correctional services, including correctional officers, nurses, doctors, mental health workers, probation and parole officers and bailiffs, are also first responders. They are our friends and our neighbours—some in the public spotlight and some outside of it—but all bring dedication and professionalism to their important roles. They all deserve equal respect and, perhaps more importantly, our support.

However, not all first responders are treated equally by the province. When we call on first responders for help in times of crisis and chaos, they listen and they deliver. They do not leave anyone behind. Nurses, probation and parole officers, as well as bailiffs, were unfortunately left out of the government's PTSD bill, and we hope that this is something that will be addressed. When it comes to first responders seeking support after coming to our rescue, we must not leave anyone behind. Our first responders are calling on us for help and we need to answer that call.

Thank you to Ontario's first responders for serving our province so faithfully and being our heroes in life.

EDUCATION WEEK

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Today it is my pleasure to rise not only as the NDP education critic but on behalf of the entire New Democratic caucus to mark Education Week 2016.

This week, we celebrate student achievement and our dedicated and professional education workers in the public, Catholic and French-language school boards that provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed.

This government talks a lot about the importance of education. Year after year, they claim to be investing in education, but year after year, we see the government not spend dedicated education dollars. In this year's budget, there was a commitment to cut \$430 million from education. Over \$1 billion dedicated to our education system was not spent by the Liberal government over the last three years.

The result is a continued and alarming decrease in supports for students with special education needs. This year alone, the Liberal government cut \$8 million in special education funding to 25 school boards. Children with autism have been thrown off the list for IBI therapy, and there is no plan or additional funding to school boards to be able to not only support these students but help them reach their full potential.

Provincial schools for the deaf and hard of hearing as well as demonstration schools for students with severe learning disabilities are under the threat of closure. Support staff and teachers are being laid off. Even today, during support staff appreciation week, 20 educational assistants in Bruce-Grey—these are the professionals in our education system that assist our highest-needs students—may lose their jobs.

The repair backlog for our schools is out of control. Our infrastructure is crumbling. The government continues to starve school boards of the money they need to maintain these buildings, the very buildings that our students are expected to learn in.

Child care regulations were brought forward where they redefined a 12-month-old child as a toddler that would place them in a room with children twice their age. Luckily, they have backed off on this plan, but the minister has promised to bring forward regulations again.

We've seen attacks on education workers, both under Bill 115 and Bill 103—it's important to note that the Conservatives supported both of those bills. They then threatened to dock the pay of the lowest-paid education workers if they did their jobs exactly as described in their contracts.

If we are going to support an education system, the minister and the government need to support the school boards and the people that work within the boards.

FIRST RESPONDERS DAY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to rise today on First Responders Day and respond to the minister as the NDP critic for community safety and correctional services.

First, I would also like to acknowledge and welcome the first responders who are joining us here today in the Legislature. It's great to see you, as always, and thank you.

1340

I want to also take this opportunity to thank them for the work they do every day, but I want to recognize the fact that while Ontarians appreciate all they do to keep us safe, secure, healthy and protected, we will never fully understand what is involved. We see the good-news stories and we see the bad-news stories, but we will never see the gut-wrenching and impossible decisions they make all the time. We won't feel the pain that they carry with them day in and day out. We don't know the sense of responsibility and duty that they feel every day. We are able to live our lives, come and go safely, make plans with our families out in our communities and take for granted that we will be safe or cared for if something happens, and we thank them for that.

I also want to focus on the stress and realities of the job. Safety is about more than just physical safety; it is whole-person wellness. Physical health and mental health must go hand in hand. I want to thank my colleague from Parkdale-High Park for her advocacy and tireless commitment to mental health, safety and our first responders. She's been fighting for presumptive coverage for years and, finally, we have seen legislation come to pass.

Bill 163 is a success story, but only part of the story. While we're glad that police officers, firefighters, paramedics and correctional officers were covered under this legislation, we continue to fight for those who were not. First responders and front-line, high-stress service providers were left out quite decidedly. Nurses, bailiffs, probation and parole officers, and special constables were among those who were left out. We cannot leave behind those who are at the greatest risk for stress and trauma.

When it comes to nurses, it was wrong that they are not considered first responders, as they brought up in committee. This government recognizes nurses on First Responders Day but not when it comes to legislation.

We need to appreciate all our first responders and respect the work they do. They are heroes but, more than

that, they are our friends, our families and our neighbours. They deserve to be supported and cared for too. They have their duty to protect, defend, care and support, but let's not forget that, as legislators, we have a duty to protect, defend, care for and support them.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the price of electricity has skyrocketed under the Ontario Liberal government;

"Whereas ever-higher hydro bills are a huge concern for everyone in the province, especially seniors and others on fixed incomes, who can't afford to pay more;

"Whereas Ontario's businesses say high electricity costs are making them uncompetitive, and have contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs;

"Whereas the recent Auditor General's report found Ontarians overpaid for electricity by \$37 billion over the past eight years and estimates that we will overpay by an additional \$133 billion over the next 18 years if nothing changes;

"Whereas the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants costing \$1.1 billion, feed-in tariff ... contracts with wind and solar companies, the sale of surplus energy to neighbouring jurisdictions at a loss, the debt retirement charge, the global adjustment and smart meters that haven't met their conservation targets have all put upward pressure on hydro bills;

"Whereas the sale of 60% of Hydro One is opposed by a majority of Ontarians and will likely only lead to even higher hydro bills;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To listen to Ontarians, reverse course on the Liberal government's current hydro policies and take immediate steps to stabilize hydro bills."

I support this petition and I've also affixed my signature to it.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have hundreds of names—thousands of names—on a petition, and I want to thank Mr. Walter Vale from Worthington in my riding. It goes as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I fully support this petition and will affix my name to it and ask page Julia to deliver it to the Clerk.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and quality of life for future generations;

"Whereas the disposal of resources in landfills creates environmental hazards which have significant human and financial costs;

"Whereas all levels of government are elected to guarantee their constituents' physical, financial, emotional and mental well-being;

"Whereas the health risks to the community and watershed increase in direct relationship to the proximity of any landfill site;

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in a limestone quarry has been shown to be detrimental;

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in the headwaters of multiple highly vulnerable aquifers is detrimental;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, humbly petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To implement a moratorium in Oxford county, Ontario, on any future landfill construction or approval until such time as a full and comprehensive review of alternatives has been completed which would examine best practices in other jurisdictions around the world;

"That this review of alternatives would give particular emphasis to (a) practices which involve the total recycling or composting of all products currently destined for landfill sites in Ontario and (b) the production of goods which can be practically and efficiently recycled or reused so as to not require disposal."

I affix my signature as I support this petition.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition entitled "End the Exploitation of Unpaid Interns." It reads:

"Whereas there are an estimated 100,000 to 300,000 unpaid internships in Canada each year, depriving young people of economic opportunity and potentially displacing paid workers; and

"Whereas unpaid internships perpetuate poorer labour market outcomes for marginalized groups and those who cannot afford to participate; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Labour is not adequately enforcing existing laws on unpaid internships;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 22, the Greater Protection for Interns and Vulnerable Workers Act, which:

"(1) extends basic protections under the Employment Standards Act (ESA) to those currently excluded;

"(2) requires that posters with information about interns' rights in Ontario be conspicuously displayed in the workplace;

"(3) requires that employers provide interns with written notice about conditions of work, length of employment, hours of work, and job description, to be submitted to the ministry to enable the collection of data on internships; and

"(4) creates a system to allow anonymous and third party complaints about unpaid internships."

I fully support this petition, affix my name to it and will give to it to page Julia to take to the table.

UNADDRESSED MAIL

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas hundreds of Toronto residents have complained to all three levels of government, Toronto Police Service, and Canada Post about receiving an unsolicited publication pretending to be a community newspaper, the contents of which can be argued to be racist, sexist, homophobic and advocating violence, both in written content and the use of graphic imagery;

"Whereas the publication referenced above is not a 'community paper' in that it clearly indicates a subscription price for the publication on its cover;

"Whereas the publication referenced above is delivered without privacy packaging that is usually employed in the delivery of graphic materials, and as such is easily accessible to children;

"Whereas the publication referenced above should qualify as 'non-mailable matter' based on sections 1 and 2 of Canada Post's published Non-mailable Matter guide, and that Canada Post continues to deliver such material despite the publication's numerous violations of Canada Post's own regulations for 'unaddressed mail service';

"Whereas Canada Post offers this specific service at an additional cost, a business practice that can be changed by the crown corporation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To formally bring the issue of Canada Post's 'un-addressed mail service' to the official attention of the Canadian government; to explain the necessity of updating the regulations of this service, using the publication referenced above; and to order that Canada Post adhere to and enforce its regulations, particularly those of non-mailable matter, in the interests of all Ontarians."

I agree with this petition, sign my name and send it down to the Clerk with Grace.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Bill Walker: I have a petition with 2,152 signatures, and I'd like to read it into the record.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"The Owen Sound community connects students from a 30-kilometre radius into a well-established network of neighbourhood schools. For over 160 years, the Owen Sound Collegiate and Vocational Institute (OSCVI) has provided opportunities for our young people to excel. Graduates include: Agnes Macphail, Norman Bethune, Retta Kilborn, Billy Bishop and thousands of others. When the original OSCVI building was demolished our community was told the new facility would outlast us all (or at least for another 150 years). It was designed with the needs of secondary students in mind and continues to be a centre of excellence for our student population, and a source of community pride;

1350

"Whereas the recent public ARC discussion in the community was over a very different proposal (which was supported in the community);

"Whereas the plan announced by the Bluewater District School Board on March 1 was a complete change and the public was not adequately consulted;

"Whereas students, parents and the community had less than 50 days to adjust to the sudden closure of their school—as students are preparing for final exams; and

"Whereas the city of Owen Sound has requested a delay of one year to prepare for a major change, we request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario ask the Bluewater board of education to delay the implementation of any school closures and amalgamation by one year, to allow for students and the community to adjust, and to permit stakeholder groups to consult on the proposal to close OSCVI."

I fully support this, and will affix my name and send it with page Emma.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I have thousands of signatures here from the people of London about nurses.

"Nurses Know—A Petition for Better Care.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas providing high-quality, universal public health care is critical for a fair and thriving Ontario; and

"Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to registered nurses ... and hurt patient care; and

"Whereas, in 2015 alone, Ontario has lost more than 1.5 million hours of RN care due to cuts; and

"Whereas procedures are being off-loaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and

"Whereas funded services are being cut from hospitals and are not being provided in the community; and

"Whereas cutting skilled care means patients suffer more complicated readmissions and death;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

"Commit to restoring hospital base operating funding to at least cover the costs of inflation and population growth;

"Create a fully-funded multi-year health human resources plan to bring Ontario's ratio of registered nurses to population up to the national average; and

"Ensure hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality, integrated care for clinical procedures and stop plans for moving such procedures into private, unaccountable clinics."

I sign this petition and give it to page Preston to deliver.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I have over 2,000 signatures here to the petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I affix my signature to this petition and give it to the page.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Wayne Gates: "Hydro One Not for Sale! Say No to Privatization.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

I agree with the petition and I'll sign my name.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario is rewriting the Ontario drug benefit, a change that will force seniors to pay significantly more for prescription drugs starting on August 1, 2016;

"Whereas the proposed increase will force most seniors to pay nearly twice as much for their medication, raising the annual deductible to \$170 from \$100, increasing the co-payment or a fee paid per prescription;

"Whereas prescription drugs make up the largest portion—almost 30%—of out-of-pocket spending for seniors, and that the average senior household spends about \$500 a year on regular prescription drugs and requires at least eight different types of drugs each year to stay healthy and maintain their independence; and

"Whereas seniors on fixed incomes cannot afford to pay more for prescription drugs—and should not be forced to skip medications that they can no longer afford and put their health at risk;

"Whereas there is potential for seniors who skip medications to end up in emergency departments or be hospitalized, the most costly form of health care utilization, thereby significantly increasing the cost of our health care system overall;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop the government's plan to hike the cost of seniors' drugs and work to expand access and make prescription drug coverage more affordable for all Ontarians."

I agree with the petition and send it down with page Emma.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have these petitions that come from all over the northeast. I'd like to thank Madame Thérèse Sirois from Garson, in my riding. It goes as follows:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask my good page, Julia, to bring it to the Clerk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I regret to inform the House that the time for petitions has expired. But I would also remind members that it is possible for you to abbreviate your petition. If we all do that, we would probably have a better chance of getting everyone who has a petition to have their opportunity to present them. So I would remind members of that.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN ACT (STRENGTHENING RETIREMENT SECURITY FOR ONTARIANS), 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE RÉGIME DE RETRAITE DE LA PROVINCE DE L'ONTARIO (SÉCURISER LA RETRAITE EN ONTARIO)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 21, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 186, An Act to establish the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan/ Projet de loi 186, Loi établissant le Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated this bill, the member for Oshawa had the floor. I’m pleased to recognize the member for Oshawa to continue her presentation.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. All right, where did I leave off? As I recall, I was just getting on to a pension roll, so we’ll start again.

Mr. Norm Miller: Start over.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Yes, start over. Get comfortable.

As always, it is my pleasure to rise in this House and speak on important topics, and none is so important as dignity and retiring with that dignity. So here we are, further discussing Bill 186, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act (Strengthening Retirement Security for Ontarians).

As I recall, I delivered about the first 40 minutes of my speech before we rose for constituency week two weeks ago, so I look forward to delivering my last 20—give or take a couple of seconds—this afternoon.

We’re discussing Bill 186, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, which is the third bill related to the ORPP. I’m going to double back to a few of the issues that we were discussing before the break, as what we’re

talking about is pretty important and I want to make sure the government is listening.

When we first started this discussion about our concerns regarding the ORPP, we spoke a lot about the consultation process, or the lack thereof; the fact that this is a non-universal plan that will leave millions of Ontarians excluded; and our concern that by excluding Ontarians and complicating the plan, this government is seriously jeopardizing the potential for future CPP expansion, and what this will mean for all Canadians, not just Ontarians.

1400

We spoke about the definitions surrounding comparability and what would and should be considered comparable; portability and the minimum income or earnings threshold; and whether the investment body would be arm’s-length or if the government was looking to privatize the delivery model, like they have privatized so many other important public assets and programs.

We asked whether experts and stakeholders were being included in every step of the conversation or if they were compromising the plan by caving in to external pressures.

We asked about PRPPs, DBs, DCs and the PBGF. We had a good 40-minute conversation.

Finally, Speaker, we asked about where the security, strength and reliability of existing pension plans fit into the government agenda—but more on that later.

These are all important conversations, and just when I start to think that they’re all talked out at some point, the government continues to fail us on so many of these issues. They continue to delay and diminish, water down and walk away.

Let’s not forget that these decisions have real consequences on real Ontarians’ real lives. It’s easy to get lost in the bubble of this building some days, but the decisions that the government is making are important ones. They affect how people will live in retirement or how they will plan for their futures, and they will continue to affect Ontarians for generations to come.

That’s why we need to make sure that we get it right, now. That’s why the government should be listening to the experts around them. I don’t claim to be an expert, Mr. Speaker, but I have been meeting with as many of them as I can find, and let me tell you, there are some very smart people in the pension community, and they are smart people with their hearts in the right places, too. That isn’t always an easy quality to find, so I hope that the government has taken their advice more diligently than we saw during the ORPP consultation process.

We’re getting down to the nitty-gritty now. As I said before, the clock is ticking. Of course, the government also has the ability to simply turn back time, as they did just recently by delaying the phase-in by a full year.

It’s important to note again, Speaker, that this delay was only for the first phase of employers, which is comprised of the largest corporations in the country. The government seems pretty content reassuring Ontarians that enhanced retirement security simply cannot wait

when they're glossing over the consultation process, but they were quick to hit the brakes when their friends on Bay Street interjected.

We see this fairly often. When the folks on Bay Street say, "Jump," this government says, "How high?"

By the way, smaller businesses are apparently more equipped to adjust for the plan, so the delay only pertained to the largest employers.

Delays and adjustments, as I've said before, are okay. The government is supposed to adjust their plans as they gather new information. They're supposed to re-evaluate as appropriate, take in new information, and make things better. But it just seems convenient that the new information always seems to come from the same place and benefit the same people, while Ontarians wait to hear what compromise is next to come.

Let me remind you, Speaker, that New Democrats are supportive of a strong public pension plan. We recognize that Ontarians need the kind of fundamental change that will address a fundamentally changing workplace. Part of that involves ensuring that all workers in the province have a pension plan, because no one should be left behind. I think that when we leave people behind, we're doing something wrong. We want to make sure that it's done right.

Everybody in the province deserves to retire with dignity and to share in the benefits of an Ontario public pension plan. We are, however, concerned that the legislation doesn't align with the previous Liberal promises in all the ways that I've already discussed, and more.

We hope that the Premier will continue to push the federal Liberal government to expand the Canada Pension Plan. Like everyone else, we're waiting to see if the Prime Minister delivers on his campaign promise to see what an enhanced CPP will look like.

As you all know, the CPP is a universal plan that covers all Canadians, including those working for the federal government and the self-employed, while the ORPP is targeted towards those workers who don't have a comparable workplace pension plan.

It's important that we remember that any departure of the ORPP from the CPP will make it difficult to integrate the ORPP into a future and potential CPP enhancement. If the government truly prioritizes strengthening retirement income security for all Ontarians, then, in addition to the ORPP, it should be making sure that Ontario pensioners and pensioners across Canada are put first. That means working towards a CPP enhancement and it means protecting the security of existing plans as they continue to fall under siege. These are troubling facts, Speaker, and ones that shouldn't be taken lightly. All Ontarians deserve to retire with dignity, and we are here to remind the government that "all Ontarians" is not a definition that the government can rework as they see fit.

So back to it.

During the first portion of my speech, I discussed some of the design elements and my experience trying to

have an open dialogue with the government during estimates. For anyone who has the Hansard from that exchange bookmarked, as I'm sure many of you do and go back to and review on a regular basis for future reading, perhaps, I'll give you a quick spoiler: They didn't have too many solid answers to give. But that's okay. It is what we have become accustomed to with this government. We will continue to hold them to account and fight to make sure that this plan is the best version it can possibly be.

Let's talk about exclusions. Moving forward, there is still a long way to go. The launch date of the plan is fast approaching and there are still a lot of details to be ironed out or potentially, more accurately, to be disclosed. This government has a penchant for secrets, but we ask that they deviate from their norm on this one and let the public know exactly where this plan is headed.

The fact is that with each new announcement about the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, a new group has been excluded, and often groups that the government has previously assured us would not be left out. As it stands currently, there will be millions of Ontarians excluded from the ORPP, including all Ontarians with a workplace pension plan that has been deemed comparable. That includes defined benefit plans, defined contribution plans, multi-employer pension plans, pooled registered pension plans, or PRPPs, and—where else?

All of these groups represent millions of workers that could have made the plan stronger and more reliable, and they could have benefited from increased retirement security had the government not chosen to cater to the interests of big corporations. Hopefully, the list will stop here and we won't see any additional plans deemed comparable before the rollout is complete, but we will be watching closely.

Also in terms of exclusions, all federally regulated employees will also be excluded, such as those working at airlines, banks, post offices, radio and television stations, and interprovincial railways. It's important to note that government jobs don't always offer workplace pensions, particularly for those who are hired on a temporary or seasonal basis. For example, the Toronto Star recently found that 44% of the 10,682 jobs posted and filled at Ontario ministries in 2013-14 were temporary or seasonal, not including student summer jobs.

Temporary foreign workers will be excluded, as would on-reserve First Nations employment, unless both the employer and employee elect otherwise; the self-employed, as to be determined under regulations; and whatever other groups the government decides to lump in and shut out as they see fit.

The simple fact, Speaker, is that we just don't know how much further this government will go to appease the special interests that are knocking on their doors. We believe that this plan should be for all Ontarians, and it is disappointing that the government doesn't agree.

We've asked a couple of questions. This isn't the first time that we have brought this to the government's attention. I'll read to you a question that I asked the

Minister of Finance back in February, following the government's announcement that they would be delaying the phase-in period by a year for the largest corporations in Ontario.

This is the question I had asked:

"All Ontarians deserve to retire with dignity. Unfortunately, this government doesn't seem to understand what constitutes 'all Ontarians.'

"Since the day the ORPP was introduced, this government has looked for ways to exclude people. First, they have slowly but surely decreased the number of eligible people, and now they're just delaying the plan entirely.... Pension plans are made stronger with more people ... but the government is scaling back this plan by the minute.

"Will the minister please explain why every announcement they have made about the ORPP includes new exclusions [and] new delays...."

That was one question that I had asked.

Another question that I had asked:

"Less than a month ago, the finance minister said Ontarians 'can't wait any longer' for increased retirement security. But now he seems to think that [they] can wait an extra year while they focus on a dynamic business environment.

1410

"The Premier and her government have grown out of touch with the priorities of Ontarians. These aren't small businesses or mom-and-pop shops that they're delaying this for; they are the largest corporations in our province."

So the final question was: "Why has the minister put the interests of big corporations ahead of the interests of" Ontarians? I'm sure we're still wondering, but, of course, we never really received an answer.

I know that the government thinks that they don't have to answer us, but we're asking on behalf of Ontarians. We're asking on behalf of the millions of Ontarians who have been excluded from the ORPP and the ones who are being included in a weaker plan because of the government's actions. Ontarians deserve these answers and it's disappointing that they've opted not to provide them.

This is not our first question. We've been asking about who would be excluded from the plan as long as I have actually been in this Legislature. The government has worked pretty hard not to provide us clear answers the whole time. I know that they're still figuring things out. Had we made it universal, we wouldn't have these conversations.

Here's a question that I asked back in November of 2014 about whether PRPPs would be considered comparable and subsequently excluded from the ORPP. You'll notice that this is a follow-up to the question I asked the previous month, which I also did not receive an answer to. I had asked the Associate Minister of Finance, "Questions remain about the government's proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. We know that 'comparable' plans will be exempt, but the government is still to define exactly what that means." This is a long time ago, when they weren't letting us know what "comparable"

meant. We're still discovering that now, and I am not entirely clear on what exactly "comparable" will look like when all is said and done.

"They continue to prioritize their bank-friendly PRPP legislation.

"Speaker, I had asked this again and had not receive an answer." So that day we asked, "Will PRPPs be considered comparable and qualify for an exemption from the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan?"

At that time, they were telling us that PRPPs will merely supplement the ORPP. But back then, there was foreshadowing. There were hints that it would become a substitute. And now—flash forward—we have a bit more of an answer. It took a year or two to receive it but, yes, PRPPs that don't yet exist are going to be considered comparable. It's a shame.

But anyway, Mr. Speaker, that's the way it's supposed to go. We're supposed to ask a question, they answer, and then we share with Ontarians. I'm not sure if this is the accountability and transparency that the Premier preached about during the last election, but I think that Ontarians expect more.

Ontarians have real concerns, Speaker, concerns that are being ignored. They have concerns about the ORPP and concerns about pension security in general.

While the government is focused on creating a new plan that will exclude millions of Ontarians, they are simultaneously ignoring millions of other Ontarians who are concerned about the safety of their workplace pension plans. I have met with workers from GM, US Steel, Nortel, Sears, Labatt, and a number of other organizations that are worried about the security of their existing pension plans, which means that they are worried about the retirement security of thousands upon thousands of Ontarians.

Recently, I received an email from an employee at Fiat Chrysler that expressed a number of these concerns. I'd like to share that email with you today. I realize that it came from one individual, but it really represents the concerns of many, many more. This is the email:

"I am a retiree who receives a pension from the Fiat Chrysler Automobiles Salaried Employees' Retirement Plan. I am also a member of the CCRetirees Organization, which is an active member of the Canadian Federation of Pensioners, which represents the interests of more than 250,000 retired Canadians.

"I write to you today because I am deeply concerned about the health of my pension plan and the accountability, reporting and transparency requirements of pension plans in Ontario. Nortel is an ongoing example of what happens to pensioners without appropriate governmental oversight and realistic enforcement of the regulation to ensure employers meet their obligation to retired employees who upheld their end of the workplace bargain.

"I consider my pension to be deferred wages—a promise to pay—earned when actively employed by my employer. I implore you to support changes necessary to ensure my pension security and that of all Ontario members of defined benefit plans.

"Specifically, I request that you require:

"(1) All plans must be funded to a minimum solvency level of 90%, with any deficiency below 90% to be funded in the following year.

"(2) All employers must complete actuarial valuations of their plans annually, and to communicate these valuation results to plan members not later than six months from the prior year end.

"(3) Prompt enforcement by the Financial Services Commission of Ontario to compel and ensure compliance with employer obligations. Underfunding in Ontario is commonplace and has been for years.

"(4) Establishment of pension advisory committees with authority, access to plan information, and meaningful representation by plan members.

"(5) Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund limits be increased from the current \$1,000 monthly to at least \$2,500. If plans were funded on the solvency basis as in point 1 above, the likelihood of requiring access to such funds would be greatly reduced."

He continues, "In my opinion the current 82% actuarial average solvency-based funding of pensions in Ontario is inadequate. The current Ontario initiative to allow a change from solvency funding to funding based upon the going-concern concept is a backward step demonstrating contempt for the bargain we have honoured.

"I keep hearing retirement security is a priority of the current government but the failure to enact recommendations of its own findings and the continued acquiescence in the face of the financial sector lobby makes me question the strength of this initiative. I just want government to make the rules such that my employer, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, has to honour the promises made to me."

There are some excellent ideas in there, ideas the government should be listening to. I know the government doesn't like to listen to me or to my questions, but I ask that you hear the questions of the thousands if not millions of Ontarians that are worried about their retirement security. We have an obligation to protect them, and listening is a great place to start.

I think I have just about completed my 19 minutes and 44 seconds remaining. I'll take this opportunity to, again, challenge the government to keep their ears open, as they are continuing to put final touches on this plan, to make it the best and the strongest that it can be and to be open to Ontarians and to really prioritize dignity in retirement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I'm very proud to rise in the House today to speak on behalf of Bill 186.

I want to thank the member from Oshawa, who is my critic on the pension file. I know that she has said in her remarks that pensions are amongst her favourite topics.

Mr. Speaker, our Premier and this government have taken leadership to strengthen retirement security here in Ontario. Our goal is that, by 2020, all Ontario's workers will either be in the ORPP or in a comparable workplace-based pension plan.

Indeed, retirement security is about dignity. For me, the person who was the most dignified while I was growing up was my grandmother, Eva Hunter. She was a single mom of 14 children, and when her husband, Allan Hunter, passed away—an untimely death—she continued to be the matriarch of our family. I remember asking her many questions about life, and her advice to me was to put away something for when you get old so you can have your independence. That was very good advice.

Section 23 of Bill 186 entitles the members of this plan to a pension for life. That will provide dignity to people when they are old and can no longer work because they will have income, and that will give them the opportunity to have choice. This is about ensuring that when people retire, they can retire with dignity and they can retire knowing that they will have a pension income for life. That's why I'm asking all members to support Bill 186.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to thank the member from Whitby—or is it just Oshawa?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: What do you mean, "just Oshawa"?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Oh, sorry. Whitby—Oshawa is in our camp here.

Anyway, thank you for your long debate today.

Just to add a few points that maybe the government can answer down the road or think about as they move this bill through committee.

1420

The effect that this pension plan is going to have on those businesses that already have pension plans and provide pension plans—I've heard from many in my riding that will most likely be moving away from their employment pension plans to the ORPP, which is actually not beneficial to the employees in the workplace because the penalties that this government is placing on those companies, on their pension plans, will be that much greater than what the ORPP provides. It makes it least affordable.

Today, the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario is in the Legislature, and they are talking about the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan to members as they meet with them. They are small businesses throughout much of Ontario—really strong in rural Ontario. Every one of us who are in rural Ontario knows our insurance agents quite well. They're saying they're disappointed that the government ignored their request to allow group RRSPs as comparable plans that would be exempt from the ORPP. By not permitting group RRSPs to be exempt, they will be doing more harm than good, as employers that do offer relatively generous plans may be forced to cancel their plans altogether in order to comply with the ORPP and control employee costs.

My concern locally is what the Formet and Magna CEO said years ago: that if the government moved forward with the ORPP they would stop investment in our province. I have a Formet plant in my riding which

employs over 1,000 people. They're happily, gainfully employed. I'd hate to see investment end, because that usually means they're leaving the province, and that's terrible for my riding.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I, too, am happy to put a few seconds of speech on the record about pension plans. Let's make it very clear: We all support pension plans. We all want to make sure that as people age they have a way to support themselves. As you age and are no longer able to work and make an income, there has to be an income coming from someplace so you can continue to live. The basics are clear—easily understood.

What the government is putting forward has too many grey zones. They say "everyone," but really, depending on who you work for, you may or may not qualify. Really? We have a model to follow. We have the CPP. Everybody who works, not only in the province but in this country, is covered by the Canada Pension Plan or the Québec Pension Plan, if you happen to live in Quebec. The minute you get an hour's pay, you pay into the CPP and then you get it back once you're retired.

Why do we have to put something complicated that excludes a whole bunch of workers, not based on the fact, "Do they have needs as they grow older?" Yes, the needs will be the same. We're all human beings. But depending on who they work for and how they work and what kind of compensation package was offered to them, some of us will be covered and some of us won't be. That can't be. We will all age. We will all need support when we age. We will all need to continue to have a stream of income.

I come from Sudbury. The number of people that receive defined benefit pensions in my riding is really, really high. What does that mean? That means security for your old age. That means that my 93-year-old—my time is over. Sorry, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm delighted to have the chance to speak in support of the legislation, Bill 186. I did listen closely to the member from Oshawa and her remarks and, of course, the members from both the Conservative and NDP caucuses here this afternoon.

I think the proof that the government and specifically the proof that the Associate Minister of Finance—the minister responsible for this particular undertaking—are moving in exactly the right direction is being clearly demonstrated here this afternoon, because the Conservative Party believes that we are going too far and the NDP believes that we are not going far enough.

I think it's also important to acknowledge in debate officially that the NDP is belatedly finding its voice with respect to the need to ensure that we are providing income security for those who will be retiring in years to come, because, of course, the record will show very clearly that over the last year or two in particular they seem to have completely forgotten about the importance

of moving forward with this kind of plan. There are no two individuals in the province of Ontario other than Premier Kathleen Wynne and Minister Mitzi Hunter who are more dedicated and devoted to making sure we get this right, so that in years to come we can continue to provide in particular for those who have helped build up our economy so we can continue to support and expand the middle class within the province, which at the end of the day helps to ensure that we have a strong economy and helps to support all the other critical investments we need to make going forward for years and decades to make sure that the quality of life for the people we are proud to represent remains strong.

Notwithstanding their questions, I would encourage everybody, both in the Conservative caucus and in the NDP, to put aside their partisan differences on this one and make sure that we go forward to committee and beyond to pass this legislation to create the ORPP and build a brighter future for Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes questions and comments. We return to the member for Oshawa for her reply.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the thoughtful comments from my colleagues around the room.

First, to the Associate Minister of Finance: Yes, indeed, I am her critic and I am listening carefully, and I'm glad that she listens carefully as well, sometimes. I want to say that I appreciated what she had to say about her grandmother, Eva Hunter, and putting something away for the future so that you can have independence. That is good advice, but it highlights the fact that so many struggle day to day and don't even have independence now along the way. That's why it is fundamentally important to have a strong public pension plan. Individuals are doing their best to scrape by, and having an appropriate vehicle that can support them in retirement is why we're here, having this conversation.

To the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London: Yes, I am from "just Oshawa," but it is grand and it is mighty and there's nothing "just Oshawa" about it. But his points about existing pension plans and group RRSPs and some of those conversations—I remember that initially the conversations were about DB plans being the only ones that might be considered comparable. We've come so far from that, and now non-existent PRPPs and anything else that meets a very basic threshold are considered comparable and therefore exempt, and that's disappointing.

To the member from Nickel Belt: Thank you for reminding us that we do have a model to follow—the CPP—where everyone is covered. I don't know why this government is so afraid to talk about universal plans and the importance—we could have continued modelling it after the CPP rather than talk about modeling CPP expansion after the ORPP.

Unfortunately I'm running out of time, but the Minister of Finance said that they feel they're moving in exactly the right direction. I would say: a little less Bay Street and a little more left direction, and then we would have a direction.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Ottawa—Orléans.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to start by saying that I will be sharing my time with the member for Newmarket—Aurora and the member for Kitchener Centre.

I'm proud to rise today and speak about Bill 186, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act. As a newly elected member, I was propelled into this chamber by the constituents of Ottawa—Orléans, who believe that retirement security must be enhanced. I campaigned on this promise, and certainly it is a promise we will deliver on. As I was canvassing, I heard the concern of many parents and grandparents about the future of their children and also their grandchildren. I heard that our current retirement security will not be enough for the next generation of retirees. CPP will not be able to keep pace, and many fear that their children or their grandchildren will not be able to retire with the dignity they deserve.

Also, I was a member who sat on the social policy committee. I heard from businesses that expressed concerns about the timeline of our contributions. This government has listened to their concerns and revamped the timelines. I would like to share that enrolment will begin in January 2017 and contributions will start on January 1, 2018. This will allow businesses the time they need to prepare.

1430

As a former business owner and as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, I understand these concerns, but I also have to say that the ORPP can help businesses retain their employees. The ORPP is a way for businesses to retain good employees by providing them with the much-needed benefits of a pension plan. When both the employee and the employer are contributing to the long-term welfare of the employee, it signals a strong commitment by everyone to the happiness and health of this individual. A stronger and more secure retirement will make an employee happier, healthier and more productive, and I think it's a win for everyone.

Deferred savings in the form of the ORPP will also help our economy in the long term by creating savings for retirees to access that will help them retain their standard of living. This will ensure that they do not fall into elder poverty and also give them money to help support the economy through potential consumer spending. Collectively, we can solve a potentially large retirement income shortfall for our youth and young adults, who deserve to retire with the same dignity as their parents and grandparents.

The ORPP also addresses a growing trend in the workforce. Workplaces are changing, and we are seeing greater part-time and contract work. Our youth and young adults are working in more less traditionally fixed workplace contracts. This is a concern we hear—and that I certainly hear—and we have an expert panel that is studying the issue of changing workplaces. The ORPP will ensure that those who work in this new workplace

situation are able to contribute, giving them a secure retirement.

With a growing number of people in the workforce not able to access workplace pensions or private pensions, we must enhance our communal pension system through the ORPP. Our pension enhancement will complement the CPP and also capture a larger portion of people who aren't captured under the current CPP. Therefore, until we can have comprehensive CPP reform at the federal level, Ontario must remain steadfast in its commitment to protect the retirement security of our young adults of today.

Enhancing our pension system through the ORPP is also a form of intergenerational equality. In our society, it is important that we realize that successive generations have a commitment to one another. As parents take care of their children and in turn are taken care of by their kids—I have to say that, working in the retirement home industry for several years, I definitely have seen this—we must ensure that retirement security is guaranteed for all generations across the generations. As our workplace changes and our generation passes, it is a matter of fairness that we continue to guarantee the same retirement security that each passing generation has enjoyed before.

In closing, I know that we have debated the ORPP before. I actually spoke on this; it's something I feel very passionate about. But I have to say it is important that we continue to discuss the virtues of helping the youth and adults who will have greater retirement security long after we are gone from this chamber.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Newmarket—Aurora.

Mr. Chris Ballard: It gives me great pleasure to be able to speak on Bill 186. There is real excitement in my riding of Newmarket—Aurora, as I am out and about, talking with residents of Newmarket—Aurora about Bill 186—the ORPP—what it means to them and, more importantly, what it means to their children.

Residents have a lot of questions, but they are, and remain, exceptionally positive about the direction of the government, especially those parents with children in their twenties who are just starting out in the corporate world or are working in precarious employment. Parents, being good parents, are always concerned about the future of our children. So, for those people in the riding of Newmarket—Aurora, what I want to do is just take a few minutes to highlight some of the key, important parts of this important legislation. I am so grateful to the associate minister for shepherding this legislation to this point and I look forward to seeing it through the House.

One of those key points that I think we need to be cognizant of is that the foundation of this legislation is that every worker deserves to have a secure retirement. It's as simple as that, Mr. Speaker. The ORPP will help close the retirement savings gap for two thirds of Ontario employees who do not have a workplace pension plan. As I mentioned earlier, this gap is even worse for young people. Three quarters of Ontario workers 25 to 34 do not have a workplace pension plan. That's why our govern-

ment introduced the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. Bill 186 is a critical leap forward in our commitment to deliver greater pension coverage and adequacy for Ontario workers.

Carrying on, let's look at some of the benefits of the ORPP. It will provide Ontario workers with a predictable stream of income, paid for life, in retirement. Ontarians will be eligible to collect benefits beginning in 2022; that's not far off. The ORPP is designed to provide plan members a 15% income replacement rate after 40 years of contributing to the plan. A member would be eligible to begin collecting a benefit at 65, with actuarially adjusted benefits as early as 60 and as late as 70.

The amount of money any individual receives from the ORPP after they retire would depend on how many years they contribute to the pension plan and their salary throughout those years. This legislation confirms that pension plans, contributions and maximum earning thresholds would be indexed to inflation, so that plan members' benefits maintain their value for life. Similar to the CPP, this legislation also outlines a survivor benefit, and that is exceptionally important.

I've had some questions from businesses in the riding of Newmarket–Aurora when we've been talking about ORPP. One of the things that's top of mind is around the area of what is comparable. I want to take just a minute to run through some of those specifics, if I might, Mr. Speaker. As the government has previously outlined, Ontario workers participating in comparable plans will be exempt from participating in the ORPP. The government made this decision as we recognized that there are good registered pension plans that exist, and our focus is on ensuring those without plans are able to access financial security in retirement.

Comparable workplace pension plans—and here are the specifics—are registered pension plans that meet a minimum benefit contribution threshold. Here's the threshold:

- defined benefit plans with an annual benefit accrual rate of at least 0.5%;
- defined contribution plans which have a minimum total contribution rate of 8%, with employers contributing at least half that amount;
- multi-employer pension plans; and
- pooled registration pension plans, when available in Ontario.

Those are some of the key things that need to be considered.

A word around the administration of the ORPP, because I think people need to understand the thinking that has gone into how these funds will be collected and administered. The bill reaffirms our government's commitment to ensure that the ORPP contributions are managed at arm's length from the government. The ORPP's administration corporation will have broad responsibilities, including enrolling members; collecting and investing contributions in trust; administering benefits; and communicating with employers, members and other beneficiaries.

1440

Through a very strong accountability and transparency framework, the board of directors and management team of the ORPP Administration Corp. will be fully accountable to plan members. The corporation will hold all contributions in trust for the benefit of the members of the plan. As I said earlier, and importantly, revenues will not form part of government revenues, and the government will not determine where and how contributions are invested. I think that is a very important point to reiterate.

The government has designed the ORPP to be sustainable over the long term. The act would establish a formal funding policy to guide the actions of the ORPP and the government in the event of a funding shortfall or excess.

In wrapping up, I just wanted to go back and reiterate one of the key points, one that is of great importance to the residents of Newmarket and Aurora and across Ontario: Passing Bill 186 will bring us one step closer to our government's goal that all Ontario workers are enrolled in either the ORPP or a comparable workplace pension plan by 2020. It's so important that we make sure those Ontario residents who are working will be taken care of as they enter retirement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm very pleased to join the discussion this afternoon in the House supporting Bill 186, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act.

Mr. Speaker, two years ago at this time, like you and many of our colleagues here in the House—we were in the thick of the election campaign—I was out knocking on doors. The one thing that I did hear over and over again in my riding of Kitchener Centre from our constituents was their concern about retirement security. After a lifetime of working, what a person in this country collects in retirement from the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security is hardly enough to live on. We want to ensure that our seniors here in Ontario can live with dignity and that all members of our society do have the ability to contribute to a healthier economy and to be able to spend.

This is exactly why we're introducing the ORPP. We need to help close the retirement savings gap. When two thirds of Ontario employees don't have a workplace pension plan, it really became imperative for our government to take action, an action that the people in my community in Kitchener Centre tell me is very important to them.

This gap is even bigger among our youth. When three quarters of Ontario workers who are between 25 and 34 are without a workplace pension plan, I do worry about the future of our young workers and I worry about my very own kids. My three children are among those who currently don't have a workplace pension plan. They are all in their twenties. My eldest is the CEO of a tech start-up in Kitchener, and his younger brother heads the business development section of that company—you can say it's a family affair. My daughter is graduating in a few weeks from the University of Waterloo with a degree

in English literature. As their mother, I am very concerned about what lies in store for them when they retire in about 40 years' time. I know they're not thinking about that, but I'm thinking about it on their behalf.

Because of the ORPP, we can be assured that not only my children but all children in Ontario, all youth, are going to be saving a little bit from each paycheque. That is going to accrue over time, and by the time they become senior citizens, that will be there for them.

The ORPP will follow a worker throughout his or her working years. This is very important because today, as you know, people change jobs and careers far more often than they used to. This government understands changing times. Many young people don't have the job security that we had years ago, when you might have spent 30 or 40 years working at one company. The ORPP is flexible. It's movable, just like today's workforce is.

I'd like to share with you some of the other important details about this bill, Mr. Speaker.

Our government made a commitment to ensure that the ORPP contributions are managed at an arm's-length distance from government. This is important to us. The establishment of the ORPP Administration Corp. reaffirms that commitment. Its responsibilities include enrolling members; collecting and investing contributions in trust; administering benefits; and communicating with employers, members and other beneficiaries.

The plan is built on a foundation of accountability and transparency. It's going to be fully accountable to plan members, and to this end the ORPP Administration Corp. will not form part of the government's revenues and the government will not make any decisions regarding where and how the contributions are invested.

This legislation is made to last. The act confirms that pension benefits, contributions and the maximum earnings threshold would be indexed to inflation. Again, this is very important. This allows for plan members' benefits to maintain their value over the course of time until you need them.

The funding for this plan has also been designed to be sustainable in the long term, by establishing a formal funding policy to guide the actions of the ORPP Administration Corp.

Finally, in accordance with our government's focus on transparency and accountability, we have committed to introducing legislation this fall to establish an office of the chief actuary. This office is going to provide expert and impartial advice and guidance to both the government and the ORPP Administration Corp.

Mr. Speaker, it was a very big decision for me when I decided to leave a 36-year career in broadcasting to seek the nomination in Kitchener Centre and run as the candidate there. I walked away from a very healthy pension plan—a defined benefit plan—at CTV in Kitchener that I'd been paying into for 33 years. This is what I walked away from in order to seek this position. It was—I see you shaking your head there, wondering why I did that—because I wanted to serve my community.

However, for all of the people out there who don't have pension plans, who are seeking more security in their retirement, doing this is important for the two thirds of Ontarians who currently do not have a workplace pension plan.

Mr. Speaker, as a concerned parent of three young workers who are just beginning their careers, I say this to you and to the many people in my community of Kitchener Centre who spoke to me about retirement security when I was knocking on doors and getting feedback on what was important to people: I wish to express my sincerest hopes that my colleagues here today add their voices in support of the ORPP; in support of the dignity of Ontario's seniors, who are looking for more support in their retirement years so they have spending power and so that they can pay their bills and live in dignity; and in support of the two thirds of Ontario workers who are currently without a workplace pension plan.

I know that I'll be supporting this. My colleagues on this side of the House will be supporting the ORPP. My desire is to see all members of this House stand up and say yes to this important piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments to the speeches from the members from Ottawa—Orléans, Kitchener Centre and Newmarket—Aurora.

I believe it was the member from Ottawa—Orléans who talked about this ORPP complementing the Canada Pension Plan. I would simply ask the question: now that you have a federal partner, I wonder why you aren't just expanding the Canada Pension Plan. Because the administration of this ORPP was also talked about, and I note that the government has hired their administrator for some \$520,000. I can just imagine the bureaucracy that's going to be created, so it seems to me to make a lot more sense, from the operations side, to just expand the CPP than to create a whole new bureaucracy.

I note that today is the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario Awareness Day. They left a position paper, and they say that "our membership does not support the planned ORPP.

"We are disappointed that the government ignored our request to allow group RRSPs as comparable plans that would be exempt. By not permitting group RRSPs to be exempt, it will be doing more harm than good, as employers that do offer relatively generous plans may be forced to cancel the plans altogether in order to comply with the ORPP and control employee costs."

They go on to show that, "For the average brokerage earning \$659,987 before tax, the cost will be in the range of \$19,700 to \$41,075, or 3% to 6.2% of average income." They go on to say, "To impose a cost of between \$788 to \$1,643 per employee would take away 6.3% to 13.1% of operating profit per employee."

1450

Obviously, they're making this point today in their lobby day here at Queen's Park, saying that this would be bad for all those many small businesses that are insurance brokers in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Again, I had the opportunity to talk a little bit earlier, 20 minutes earlier, about the importance of having a strong and robust pension in your elder years, and I continue to support this.

I come from Sudbury. Sudbury is heavily unionized, with most unions having, up to recently, defined benefit pensions, the type of pension that the member was talking about and the type of pension that everybody wants. Why? It doesn't need to be big, but it needs to be predictable. It needs to be managed in a way that you know how much money you will have and you can manage to live within this.

I was giving the example of my father-in-law and mother-in-law. He was 93 years old when he passed. He had been retired for close to 40 years. He didn't have a big pension, but he had a pension cheque coming every month. He knew exactly how much money he was going to get, and he knew exactly how to manage his budget so that he could afford to continue to support himself and his wife till he passed. They did that, like so many others in my riding, very successfully.

So the problem I have with the model that is being put forward is that it is not fully inclusive. I come back to—we have the model of the CPP. The CPP covers each and every one of us in Ontario. Why don't we build upon this? If we cannot get their Liberal cousin at the federal level to follow suit, why don't we simply copy this at the provincial level so that, when the time comes, we can harmonize the two? But right now, with what they're laying in front of us, it won't be feasible, and it will be a huge opportunity lost, with some of the workers left behind. Those workers will grow old, and they will need a pension.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: It's a privilege, once again, to rise in the House and to speak to Bill 186. I certainly value the debate that is happening this afternoon on this very important topic where we're talking about people's retirement security.

I shared earlier about my grandmother Eva Hunter. My grandmother passed away, actually, just two weeks after I was first elected, in August 2013; it was two days after her 87th birthday. I recall that she would always talk about having that freedom that an income provides you with. That's exactly what this is about. This is about ensuring that, when people retire, they will have an income stream for life.

We talk about the Canada Pension Plan. It's one of our most respected institutions here in Canada. It has gone a long way in addressing the issue of seniors' poverty in Canada. In fact, it has helped to ease the social burden in terms of providing income security for seniors.

When I was out across many communities in Ontario, some of the most persuasive arguments came from our seniors—people who were currently in retirement and who this plan is not necessarily for, but they understand

that this plan is for their children, for their grandchildren and for future generations to come, to ensure that people are able to put away, just as my grandmother Eva advised, that little bit of income for when you get old and you're going to need that income coming in. The ORPP is going to entitle the members of the plan to an income stream for life, and that's why I am asking the members to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: We're up for the 20 minutes, right, Mr. Speaker?

Interjection: Two minutes.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Two minutes? I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to be up for 20 minutes shortly and—

Mr. Bill Walker: Give them a preview of what you're going to say.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Exactly; I'll give a preview of what I'm going to say.

It's going to be no surprise to the government that I'm adamantly opposed to the ORPP. In fact, our leader, Patrick Brown, has been crystal clear about the damage that this is going to do to the economy in the province of Ontario: the billions and billions of dollars per year that it's going to take from businesses and from workers in the province, and just that drastic effect it's going to have—a negative effect on the economy. It's going to be less money that people can spend within our communities in every MPP's riding.

I've been on the record many times that the government needs to get the basics right to grow the economy. If they get hydro prices under control and make energy affordable again, if they get taxes competitive—I just read a recent story that they now have seven income tax brackets in the province; a number of years ago, it was just five. They need to get the fiscal house in order.

If they do all these things, people are going to have more take-home pay. In fact, every decision this government makes, it impacts workers' wages in this province, and the ORPP is going to have the same effect. It's essentially a tax on payrolls in Ontario.

I look forward to voicing more of my concerns in a few more minutes, to lay out why I think the ORPP is a devastating policy for the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Newmarket—Aurora can reply.

Mr. Chris Ballard: It's my privilege to be able to respond to members opposite and our side with regard to Bill 186. I just want to reiterate what the Minister of Transportation said. This government must be on the right track because the PCs are saying we're going too far too fast and the NDP say that we're not going far enough and it's too slow. So, since we're going down that middle track, I think we're obviously on the right track.

It would be nice to see an enhanced CPP. The government has made its position very clear. But it requires a

partnership, and not just of a federal government; it requires the partnership of all the provinces and territories. As we know, there are a few that are reluctant and have some questions. I think we're heading in that direction, but until we get there—and even if we do get there—it's so important that we continue on with the ORPP, because it offers things that even an enhanced CPP couldn't offer.

I said earlier, at the beginning, that I've had many conversations with members in my community of Newmarket–Aurora, and a lot of those conversations are with seniors who will not benefit from the ORPP. But they know the importance of a secure retirement and a secure retirement income stream. They know the importance that that will have for their grandchildren 30, 40, 50 years down the road. It's for that reason that the seniors in my riding are adamantly in support of what this legislation is going to do. It means a more secure future for their grandchildren and perhaps their children as well.

Really, Mr. Speaker, this legislation is about retirement freedom. It's specifically about freedom from the fear of poverty for those people who built the country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Now I know that I'm up for 20 minutes, to deliver the truth to the government.

As I said before, what I think about Bill 186 is no secret. I've been clear since this government announced the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan that I think it is the wrong course for families and businesses in the province of Ontario. In speaking to Bill 186 this afternoon, I am pleased to have the opportunity to dig into why I believe that to be the case.

To begin with, Mr. Speaker, the ORPP essentially is like a tax on payrolls in this province. It's more money off workers' wages, and it's a huge cost to the business community in Ontario. The government is taking money out of our pockets to invest in what they see as the public good. What defies believability is that in this case, the government contends that the public good is for them to oversee our personal retirement planning.

1500

Mr. Speaker, I think we should take a step back and look at the financial future this government has laid out for the next generation to date. Hundreds of billions of dollars of debt mean that higher taxes may very well take just as much out of our future retirees' pockets as the ORPP proposes to put back in them. Even today, the debt requires that almost \$1 billion per month is funnelled away from critical investments in the provision of vital services just to pay interest on that debt.

The services that suffer for this, as all MPPs have heard over the last number of weeks, are education, autism services and demonstration schools that are robbing the children of today of a better future.

Billions of dollars are spent annually on corporate welfare in Ontario, which the Ministry of Economic

Development claims is to improve our economy, but in fact the government does nothing to track whether these vast expenditures create any beneficial long-term effect whatsoever. They don't bother to track whether the jobs these companies promise to create in exchange for taxpayer money are kept for more than a few years. They don't bother to check if the funding has any impact whatsoever on driving innovation or increasing exports.

Just on this note, because it's very topical and it ties into my message on Bill 186 and the ORPP, the member from Kitchener Centre actually just spoke a few minutes ago saying that this government is transparent. Mr. Speaker, that is a complete lie. This government is not—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member has made an unparliamentary remark, and I would ask him to withdraw.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I withdraw.

Mr. Speaker, I want to know from the government why the secrecy around billions and billions of dollars that this government is giving to private sector companies in the province of Ontario. Every day we're seeing stories come forward of crony capitalism schemes. They're taking billions and billions of dollars out of the economy and essentially giving it to Liberal supporters in the province. Is that why this government won't come clean with taxpayers and reveal that list of all the corporate welfare grants they've given out to private corporations in this province? It's an absolute disgrace. That's what I'm hearing about in my riding and across southwestern Ontario as I've travelled throughout the last week. They're not talking about wanting the ORPP. They want to know what the heck the government is doing with the tax dollars that they're collecting now from individuals and businesses across the province.

When this Liberal government brings forward a plan they claim is born of concern they have for what sort of future individuals are personally planning, it seems somewhat disingenuous. The economic future they've been preparing—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw that unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I withdraw.

Interjection.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Sorry, I won't use that word.

But Mr. Speaker, the economic future they've been preparing to this point certainly does not speak of proficiency or prudence. To speak bluntly, with the planning we've seen from this government on a provincial scale, why should people trust their personal savings to them? Their record speaks for itself and it does not instil confidence with the people and business community in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk more about the financial situation today as the government prepares to start taking more money out of our pockets for this scheme. Wages in this province have been stagnant. People are not bringing more money home today than they were years ago, but the cost of living in this province continues to escalate.

The cost of energy has become crippling to many household budgets. I have constituents calling my office crying and yelling because they can't afford their hydro bills and they don't understand why those bills keep relentlessly going up.

Meanwhile, this government is overproducing electricity while simultaneously building more wind turbines, refurbishing our nuclear power while hinting they plan to get rid of it, and all the while encouraging consumers to conserve. This schizophrenic and expensive approach to energy is costing the people of this province dearly.

The carbon tax plan proposed by the Liberals has already outlined that the cost of transportation will also be going up. Because this tax will increase the cost of fuel, that means the cost of almost all goods will go up as businesses defray this higher expense by passing the cost along to the consumer.

Perhaps the government isn't aware of the level of personal debt most people in this province are already carrying. In a TD report from the end of last year, we saw Ontario hit a record high on the vulnerability index. Debtors in Ontario owe, on average, between \$125,000 and \$158,000. In a recent Financial Post article, Canada was singled out as one of most likely countries in the world to experience a serious recession in the near future, in part as a result of excessively high consumer debt.

Many people took on consumer debt following the 2008 recession, as a result of the allure of ultra-low interest rates. This leaves people extremely vulnerable to economic downturns, which could quickly cause them to default on their loans or force them to try to sell their homes. In Ontario, this would be particularly devastating, because the over \$300-billion provincial debt would inhibit the government's ability to respond to meet new assistance needs or deliver stimulus.

If the ORPP comes into effect, it will leave people with even less money to direct toward paying down their consumer debt, their high-interest credit card debt or their mortgage. It leaves them less money to invest in a business or education. It means they have less money to direct to retirement savings plans of their own choosing, all of which would almost certainly offer a higher rate of return than a government-invested pension plan.

Even for those who can afford to lose that extra chunk from their take-home pay, it means that money isn't available to put toward an emergency fund, pay down debt or buy a home. Not only would such measures likely offer a better rate of return; they would provide better assurance of financial stability in the short and medium term for families.

In the tragic event that one partner passes away, the money they channel into the ORPP is gone, leaving their family even more vulnerable. If it had gone to paying off debt or to a rainy day fund, that family would have fewer liabilities to contend with. If that money had instead been directed toward home ownership, not only would that family enjoy the benefits of having a home; they would have that equity immediately available should a crisis arise.

Home equity should not be underestimated. It increasingly figures into people's retirement savings plans as they make strategic choices about what home to buy, with an eye to what they can sell or rent it for later as they downsize. The consideration of assets is a very valid part of retirement planning, and it's a savings vehicle that would be made less accessible by the implementation of the Liberals' ORPP.

Having spoken briefly about the impact of employee contribution to this plan, I would like to turn to the other half of the ORPP contribution, which of course will come from employers in the province of Ontario. Along with paying the highest WSIB premiums in the country, high electricity rates and now the pending ORPP, our job creators are finding it increasingly difficult to grow their businesses here in Ontario. While this government may think that businesses have reserves of disposable cash available for this purpose, the fact of the matter is that it's an added expense that makes each employee on the payroll a more expensive outlay. This cost will either divert money from further hiring or investment, which certainly won't be beneficial for economic development, or companies will adjust how they compensate their employees.

If it's the latter, it will mean that the ORPP will be depriving people of even more take-home pay or will result in reduced benefits. Salaries may start lower or advance more slowly, so workers will take two hits, the first of which will be losing 1.9% in their take-home pay; the second, a reduction in existing and future compensation.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business conducted a survey of small and medium-sized businesses on this very subject, and the results were truly alarming. Their poll indicated that in order to cope with the additional cost of ORPP contributions, 69% would be forced to freeze or cut salaries and 53% would have to eliminate jobs.

All of this fails to take into account that people are not approaching retirement saving the same way they once did. It's a radically different employment landscape here in Ontario. We lost hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs in this province, most of which had provided extremely generous pension plans and benefits which extended through retirement. Those jobs are gone, and it should be acknowledged that this is due in part to the unsustainable strain of expense of providing such benefits in the long term. The truth is that we do not have evidence that this provincial plan will be sustainable either.

1510

The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters certainly seem to believe that it will have a serious and negative impact on Ontario's manufacturers and their 750,000 employees. Their report on the subject noted, "There is serious and widespread concern that this mandatory additional payroll tax will further undermine the confidence of an already fragile manufacturing sector. Simply put, as currently structured, the ORPP adds one more reason not to invest or employ more workers in Ontario."

The ORPP is modelled after the CPP, but the CPP benefits from an economy of scale bigger than what Ontario's plan will access and it still suffers from a huge unfunded liability. It remains unclear what effect an expanded CPP would have on the ORPP. The government has been all over the map on this.

During the recent federal election, the Premier very publicly lambasted then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper for his dismissal of the ORPP, while actively campaigning for Justin Trudeau and simultaneously spending well over half a million dollars of taxpayers' money to advertise the ORPP during that election campaign. At the time, the Premier had indicated that if Trudeau were elected, she would reconsider the ORPP. Even just last week, the Premier was quoted as saying, "Our position has always been that the CPP needs to be enhanced, that it's inadequate and needs to be updated. The previous government wasn't interested in looking at that at all. This government is, and so we are going to continue to work with the new federal government."

So I would like to know what the Premier's plan would be for the ORPP if the CPP were enhanced in two, three, five or 10 years. Once a new bureaucracy has been set up and money has been collected and channelled into investments, potentially for years, what does the Premier propose Ontario should do then?

Saying that the ORPP would be folded or could be folded into the CPP is an extremely simplistic answer that takes a lot for granted, especially when so very recently, this Premier found that she could not work with the federal government on pensions. Not only that, but many employers who currently offer a pension benefit may cancel their program as a result of the implementation of the ORPP. If this program gets cancelled in a few years' time, it seems unlikely that the employer initiatives will be re-established. Budgets will be rewritten and workplace pension plans will probably never be the same in this province.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has long been raising the alarm about this problem. They are concerned that the ORPP would erode demand for workplace retirement savings plans and lead to a less diversified retirement income system.

In Canada, we have a three-pillars approach to retirement savings. The first of these pillars is universal government benefits for seniors, the second is the Canada Pension Plan and the third pillar is employment pension plans and individual retirement savings. We've already seen this third pillar take a hit with the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs. Continuing to undermine it by forcing people to increasingly rely on the government is risky, especially when you're asking for that money almost 50 years before someone will see any benefit from it.

So far, this ORPP scheme has been long on advertising but very short on details, which is perhaps why it seems each successive poll on the ORPP shows mounting disapproval from the people of Ontario. The government loves talking about it in broad strokes, but the plan keeps changing and new questions keep arising.

For starters, we don't even know what this plan will cost to administer. That alone should raise red flags. The government hasn't even bothered to figure out what this scheme would cost to administer. It seems unlikely they looked into any of the less-direct economic repercussions of the plan in a comprehensive way.

The advertising the government has undertaken, while expensive, doesn't seem to have been all that informative. During finance committee hearings, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business observed: "I'm not quite sure, though, that the average Ontarian actually understands that this is going to be money coming from their paycheque. I think they're going to realize it after they see that deduction in 2017 onwards.... As a small business owner, you either have to take from your payroll, meaning reducing your labour force, or you have to pass it on to the consumer, meaning raising prices. If you keep raising prices you're not going to be competitive and you'll be out of business pretty soon."

The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters have laid out concerns that companies don't understand what the ORPP means for them or how it will work. They also contend that employees do not understand that the ORPP will result in decreased private sector benefits such as wages, bonuses and contributions to their existing pensions and savings.

It's not simply understanding that is wanting, though, Speaker. These organizations have laid out well-measured and thoughtful critiques of the ORPP on the basis of unsustainability and the detrimental impact it may have on our economy.

The CFIB and CME are not alone in raising such concerns. Many other well-respected organizations, groups and advocates join in their critique of the ORPP, including the Chartered Professional Accountants of Ontario, Primerica Financial, the Progressive Contractors Association of Canada, the Investment Funds Institute of Canada, the Air Transport Association of Canada, the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada, Trillium Automobile Dealers Association, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Ontario Home Builders' Association and other small and medium-sized businesses, citizens groups, municipalities, statisticians as well as public policy and business academics.

This is what assistant professor Ian Lee from Carleton University's Sprott School of Business had to say about it:

"Under the ORPP, the mandatory employer and employee contribution that will be withdrawn from Ontario's economy will be a combined \$2,470 for someone earning \$65,000 a year. That mandatory withdrawal from Ontario's economy is money that will not be spent or invested otherwise, and this will slow down Ontario's economy further than it already is. This is the last thing we need to do.

"There is a perception that the ORPP will benefit the lower 40% of income earners. It won't—because every dollar received from ORPP will reduce GIS benefits by

exactly one dollar. Instead, it will provide a small net benefit to the top 60%.”

To many of us, it is clear that the ORPP is a drag on the economy which offers questionable benefits. Employees, levied another charge on their paycheque, have less income to pump back into our economy; and employers, with the prospect of paying higher costs to keep people employed, have a disincentive to hire, and perhaps even an incentive to downsize.

But what about the category of people who are self-employed? How does the ORPP affect those who work for themselves as carpenters, Web designers, plumbers or consultants? Unlike the typical employee-employer relationship, these individuals get punished even more—punished for the fact that they have decided to take a risk and start a business here in Ontario. The reason is that for a self-employed individual, they are both employee and employer, and as both employee and employer, the self-employed individual is responsible for paying the entire pension contribution levelled on their earnings. As we know, Speaker, an employee and employer share the burden of each contributing half of the pension amount; however, if you are your own boss, you must foot the entire bill.

In closing, this plan has not been thought out. This is a made-at-Queen's-Park pension scheme. It's going to take billions of dollars out of the economy, as I said. It's taking money and potential revenue from our small businesses in our community. But, of course, we know that this government only cares about the top 1% of big businesses in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to add my two minutes and my two cents to the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex—

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Give us 10 cents.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Ten cents? All right. Inflation.

I have some thoughts based on his remarks. Certainly, when the member is speaking about manufacturing jobs and the loss of good, solid manufacturing jobs, I understand that all too well in Oshawa. Certainly—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Not just Oshawa.

1520

Ms. Jennifer K. French: No, not just Oshawa, but in Oshawa, to recognize how hard hit we have been with the loss of manufacturing jobs and what that feels like in a community. We should be talking about ways to bring solid manufacturing jobs to Ontario, not just waving to them as they leave.

Some of the important pieces of these jobs are the strong pensions and benefits, the sick leave and strong wages that come with solid, strong manufacturing jobs. This is what we need to keep our economy running. This is what we need to keep people contributing in their communities, to keep being able to make plans.

But we're here talking about this bill, and further to his comments, as he was talking about the CPP benefits,

from an economy of scale, I think that with the ORPP there are missed opportunities, that it could have been universal. If it's really going to be modelled after the CPP, that's what we should have seen. We should have seen more people contributing so that it is a strong public pension plan with more in the pot so that more would benefit and to have that economy of scale.

But to his point that this government has been all over the map on how the ORPP and the CPP are going to connect and whether or not they will move forward together—anyway, I'm out of time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to give my comments on Bill 186 and the remarks made by the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

I want to start out by pointing out that the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex was mistaken when he said there are no provisions for what happens to contributions made to the ORPP in the event of a person who paid in dying. Clearly, there are provisions in there for survivor benefits, for continuing benefits, for the payout of monies that were paid in; that is in the legislation. That is also very similar to the CPP.

I have to say that the member opposite, who's a young man, a little bit younger than myself, perhaps isn't quite thinking ahead 40 or 50 years to when he and his friends might need this money. People are living longer. The cost of providing home care supports for your loved ones is dramatically increasing, and it's not realistic to expect government or taxpayers to be able to pick up all of those costs. That's why a stable retirement income, especially for those people who have part-time jobs or have unsteady employment, is very important.

Listening to the remarks from the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, I can't help but think that, 50 years ago, the very same speech would have been made against the CPP. We know how much that has done for the well-being of Canadians. This will continue that tradition of ensuring that Ontarians have enhanced retirement benefits. That's incredibly important, and we're very proud of that on this side of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm pleased to rise to offer my comments to the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

I tabled a petition not long ago, and it was a petition not to have the ORPP for my constituents in Perth-Wellington, because they understand this is just another tax grab that this government wants to implement here. They didn't ask for it during the last campaign. I never heard that in the last campaign. What I did hear, though, in the last campaign was, “My hydro rates seem to be going up and up all the time. Can you help me out with that?”

I also heard during the last campaign that there were more people using food banks because they can't afford

what's going on in this province, and it's very difficult for them to buy food and support their families. These are even families with two incomes—they're low-paying jobs, but these families are going to food banks now, because even with two jobs they have difficulty paying their bills.

That's what the people of Ontario are asking for. They are not asking for something here that they don't trust this government with, because it's their money this government is going to have its hands on, and they certainly don't trust them with any more tax dollars.

I also heard from a World War Two vet yesterday, Speaker. This man is in his nineties. He went in at D-Day and ended up in Holland and Germany. We were at an event that had nothing to do with the ORPP, but it had all to do with his cost of living. He said, "You've got to do something. I can't take this anymore. My energy costs have gone up." This is going on with all Ontarians.

To introduce a new tax, which is what this government is proposing, is the wrong thing to be doing at this time in our history, especially when they have already saddled Ontarians with a \$22,000 debt load. Each Ontarian has that debt load right now, and now they want to introduce another tax that is going to cost Ontarians more. This is wrong, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was interesting listening to the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. Although I did not agree with everything that he said, there are big parts of what he brought forward that we need to pay attention to. This bill cannot just go forward the way it is there. He has brought some examples of what could be changed that I think are worth looking into.

Both the PC members who got up spoke about elderly people having a tough time making ends meet. You have to realize that, as people age, their ability to be gainfully employed becomes almost impossible. Those opportunities do not exist anymore. But yet, when they see their cost of living keeps shooting up—I live in northern Ontario. The people I represent—we have seen the cost of oil, the cost of gas and the cost of electricity all shooting through the roof. We have no choice but to pay those.

The one that hurts the most is the cost of electricity. Electricity is not a luxury; it's something that everybody needs in order to be able to live in this province, and it's something that keeps going up and up and needs to be addressed.

Coming back to the bill that talks about pensions: Yes, we need to make sure that people have enough money to live on, but we also need to make sure that everybody will get to share equally. All of us keep coming back to the CPP, the Canada Pension Plan. This is a plan that supports every worker. We have a federal government that campaigned on the expansion of the Canada Pension Plan. We have a government here that said that would be their preference. Why don't we line those two up?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex can reply.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I would like to thank my colleagues in the House from Oshawa, Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Perth–Wellington and Nickel Belt for their questions and comments regarding what I said regarding Bill 186.

As I said in the beginning, I've opposed this personally since day one. I strongly believe that this should be repealed, and any money collected should be refunded to those individuals or businesses who will have paid into this Liberal scheme.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to be clear. This happens to many governments after they've been in power for a long, long time. I believe this government is, quite frankly, stale. It's past its best-before date. They've been in power for 13 years, and I think, unfortunately, they're making decisions here at Queen's Park without thinking about what those impacts are going to be on the small and medium-sized businesses and individuals.

When you see this government handing out \$5 billion a year—or most of that money—to 200 of the oldest, most well-established, big companies in the province and they won't reveal that list and let taxpayers know where the heck that money is going, I wouldn't trust them to manage retirement savings for my daughter and future generations in this province.

I just want to hit on the final point, and that is that this government is going to punish those people who are on the Guaranteed Income Supplement. As I said, every dollar received from the ORPP will reduce Guaranteed Income Supplement benefits by exactly one dollar, so it's going to have a small net benefit to the top 60%. This ORPP should be dead in its tracks.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm pleased to speak on Bill 186, An Act to establish the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. This bill is the third so far to deal with the ORPP, and I believe we are expecting at least one more bill in the fall session.

My New Democrat colleagues and I want every worker in this province to be able to retire with dignity. We want them to have a good pension plan that allows them to retire free of stress and worry. We don't want them to have to worry about paying their ever-increasing hydro bill, which is something this government has the most appalling track record with. Better public pension provision is the right way forward, and we in the NDP support a public pension plan. We recognize that Ontarians need the kind of fundamental change and retirement security that will address a fundamentally changing workplace. Part of that involves ensuring that all workers in this province have an adequate pension plan.

Speaker, I'm going to take a few minutes and delve into some history. I remember, four or five years ago, that Harry Arthurs was actually hired by the Liberal

government to study pensions in this province. Harry came to me a couple of times—maybe three times—in my office to speak to me, at the time, about pensions because he felt that I had experience after lobbying in Ottawa for a few years for the steelworkers on various issues, especially pensions. We kicked it around a little bit, and at the time, he agreed with me on some of the things we talked about, which I don't see in this Ontario pension plan.

One of those things, which is very important, is that this plan does absolutely nothing for a person over 38 years old. It does nothing to address current pension problems; it does nothing—absolutely nothing—to protect current pensioners. Yes, it's good for my kids, and maybe my grandkids down the road. Yes, there will be something there, and I totally agree with that.

However, one of the suggestions I made, which would have made this pension plan better and which this government did not listen to, was the potential of buying credits. So if you have RRSPs or other sources of income, you could take your RRSPs and buy credits toward the pension plan, which would allow you to get varying amounts—anywhere from \$500 to \$1,000 a month—with your credit. You're only getting 1% or 1.5% on your money in the bank, or your RRSPs aren't paying too well, so why not invest your RRSPs or other sources of income in a pension for you for life, starting at age 65, which would give you \$700 or \$800 and may allow you to pay your hydro bill, keep you in your house and not put you on the street, and, especially if you're a single-income or elderly person, may allow you to stay in your home?

They didn't even consider that, and they did not talk to people who have experience in pensions. I never got asked anything about pensions. This minister went ahead, did her thing and didn't talk to anyone who had previous experience. I sat with Mr. Arthurs for hours at a time talking about pensions; he's the one this government hired to do that study. They've probably implemented about 10% of what he suggested.

Then we talked about grouping pensions together: smaller pension plans that would be threatened at a time of recession or depression, that would fail or go under, or end up in bankruptcy or delinquency. We wanted to gather those pensions together into larger pension plans. There's not a lot in here about that. They touched on it, Speaker, but didn't do anything about it, really.

I could go on for hours about what they didn't do, but the bottom line is that it's very important that the Premier continue to push her friends in the federal Liberal government to expand the CPP. It would probably enhance the ORPP. They're saying that the ORPP will enhance the CPP—nonsense. The ORPP will not enhance the CPP unless I'm 110 years old. It's not going to happen for 30 or 40 years, maybe. So that's just a fallacy.

We haven't seen much improvement in the CPP thanks to the federal government. The Conservatives did nothing—kept talking about it and did nothing. Will she deliver on her campaign promise? I hope the Premier

pushes for this at every meeting, especially with Mr. Trudeau. Of equal importance, if we do not enhance the CPP, what do we look for? Do you think the ORPP is going to help people in the next 25 or 30 years? Not. So all the struggling pensioners, our baby boomers—all the aging population—won't see a dime. Great plan.

Will the CPP be compatible with this ORPP, or will there be very difficult conflicts to resolve, conflicts that may be fundamentally unsolvable or challenged?

When I saw this bill, Speaker, there were a few areas that gave me grounds for grave concern. In some key areas we are very concerned that the legislation doesn't match up with the previous Liberal promises.

This pension plan does not cover all Ontario employees. Some are in and some are out. That's not what was promised a little while ago, and it's not what we in the NDP have been fighting for for decades.

Eligibility and inclusion is a really critical concern, especially if we're talking about future integration with an expanded CPP. Any departure of the ORPP from the CPP, be it positive or negative, will make it difficult to integrate the ORPP into a future and potential CPP enhancement.

One of the hallmarks of the CPP is that it is universal. We don't see this in the ORPP, Speaker. There are some groups who will be covered by neither the ORPP nor what is defined as a comparable workplace pension plan. In other words, some people still won't have access to a good pension, and many of those are precisely the people who need it most.

There are other discrepancies with previous Liberal promises with regard to implementation timelines and benefit payments.

I've been talking about this for my entire tenure in this building, Speaker, and for many years I've dealt with pensions. But as important as an Ontario pension plan is, there is much more that needs to be done for workers and retirees in this province.

If the government truly prioritizes the strengthening of retirement income security for all Ontarians, then it should be making sure that Ontario pensioners are put first in the bankruptcy process. The Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act in this country is a disgrace, and the CCAA is a disgrace. People are treated much better in the province of Quebec. It's not acceptable—and we've seen it time and time again—that when a company files for bankruptcy, money owed to the creditors is prioritized before the benefits owed to the pensioners, before deferred wages. It's wrong, it's unfair and it's unjust.

The ORPP is an important step forward to future retirees—young workers of today, Speaker—but it doesn't do much to help those over 40, as I've said. There is not enough happening to protect current retirees and to ensure sustainability in existing pension plans.

In Hamilton and Nanticoke, the US Steel debacle has seen the evisceration of pension benefits. We've seen explicitly that pensions themselves are under grave threat. Speaker, not only have they taken away the benefits from the steelworkers; now they are going to try and

attack the pension plan. These are deferred wages which were negotiated over the years—benefits and pensions—under several contracts. We went out for four or five months at a time on strike to have these in legislation, in contractual agreements.

The federal government has allowed US Steel to break contractual law. They've broken some labour laws; they've broken contractual law. They have broken all kinds of laws, and the federal government sat on their hands and did absolutely nothing. Mr. Clement did nothing. He had two years to nail these guys and take them to court. He let the time run out and then had the nerve to come into Hamilton and say, "Sorry, folks. The time's run out; there's nothing we can do." Wonderful—really taking care of the people he represents.

Okay, we see very explicitly that pensions themselves are under grave threat. As I said, the retirement security of thousands of my constituents is also in jeopardy. Just because the bankruptcy and restructuring processes are under federal jurisdiction doesn't mean that they don't have profound implications for the people of this province and the provincial government itself.

I'm very worried, Speaker, that Ontarians working for the federal government are automatically excluded from this plan from day one, without any qualification. I wonder how many people that affects. Not every employee of the federal government has access to a good pension plan. In fact, we see more and more precarious work in both the federal government and here in the provincial government.

We all know that the province has been ramping up the reliance on contract workers and temporary help agencies in order to avoid paying benefits, even basic benefits such as good vacation, paid sick days and access to a good pension. But at whose cost, Speaker? At whose cost is this? Precarious, uncertain work with low wages and poor benefits is one of the greatest challenges facing Ontarians. This government should be helping to relieve the stress, not making it worse.

1540

Instead of offering good jobs, many ministries and other agencies are helping to line the pockets of consultants and temporary help agencies while the people actually doing the labour are paid a pittance. We hear stories like this all the time. Every week in my office I hear this, and it seems to be getting worse. They can't say anything on precarious work to private business with any credibility because everyone knows they're one of the worst culprits.

Beyond federal employees, there are lots of other groups excluded. It worries me that some of them are left to be defined in the regulations. We all know how far regulations go: At the whim of the government or the cabinet, they can change regulations. We need it in legislation; we don't need it in regulation. These issues are too important to be left to regulation—far too important. We should be debating and examining them here in this Legislature. They're going to leave self-employed people to the regulations as well as workers under federal juris-

diction, such as employees of airlines, post offices, banks, radio and television stations and interprovincial railways. That's an enormous number of people in this province left to regulations. It's very disappointing—very disappointing.

We proposed a much more comprehensive plan in previous years, and I had hoped that the Liberals would be following that fairly closely. I put a plan forward a few years ago, a little more in depth, a little more solid and with a little bit more substance. Some of these things I've expressed here today would have been dealt with through debate, through committee and through input from the public and other pension plans. It didn't happen, Speaker.

The exemptions worry me. It's nowhere close to being a universal plan—nowhere even close.

The delays are of equal worry. Too much of this is being pushed back towards the next election, which makes me suspicious of commitment and motive—and with good reason. We don't want to see this being used as a political football yet again. We don't want it to be a succession of plans, consultations, announcements and re-announcements, like so many of this government's projects.

Transportation is a great example of that. Not the smallest project gets accomplished without having run through at least 10 re-announcements, 10 press releases and 10 photo ops. Often, it takes a few election cycles to get anywhere, like Hamilton light rail.

Yes, we are finally relieved when a good project finally get on the books or gets shovels in the ground, but this constant cycle of delay, press release and delay in place of real action is not good for government or the people of this province. It hurts the people who are waiting on government action. Sometimes what matters is when—when, where, why, how and how much.

We see that dynamic starting to unfold here. Are the delays creeping into this process happening because new information has come to light and for practical reasons of implementation—which is a much more defensible and understandable reason—or is it a combination of electoral calculation and successful lobbying?

As late as January 2016—just four short months ago—the Minister of Finance and the Premier were assuring us that the first phase of contributions to the ORPP would begin in 2017. The February budget scotched those hopes. We discovered that the contributions would not begin until 2018, meaning millions of Ontarians will go an extra year without better retirement security. A year of pension contributions does make a difference at the end.

This delay only affected the largest employers in the province, the ones who tend to have the most money and the loudest voices in the policy-making process—surprise, surprise. As our critic my colleague from Oshawa said, it just seems convenient that new information always seems to come from the same place and consistently benefits the same people.

My colleague has gone through, in exhaustive detail, various aspects of this bill and the very worrying

loopholes and weaknesses in it. For example, in the government's discussion paper, they had said that the comparable—and therefore exempt—workplace pension plans should mean strong defined benefit pension plans. Well, Speaker, that definition has broadened considerably since that consultation paper, no doubt under the influence of various arms of the financial services industry.

Some defined contribution plans are now considered comparable, as are multi-employer pension plans. But very oddly, there is a type of product classified as comparable which doesn't even exist in Ontario right now. I'm talking about PPRPs, pooled registered pension plans. If I were feeling charitable—and I'm not—I might have called this legislation to accommodate a financial product of the future a rare example of forward-thinking government, but it's anything but that. The banks have been through the revolving door here so many times they're dizzy, because they don't want their latest idea of a profitable product jeopardized.

Several years ago, I was the NDP pension critic in this House, and our caucus made retirement security a top priority. We reached out to Ontarians across this province to hear directly from them what they needed in retirement, and what changes they thought were needed in Ontario's existing retirement system. We came to the same conclusion that this Liberal government has reached: that a stronger, better public pension plan is the right way forward for Ontario.

One of the things I suggested during the process was, as I said before, a buy-back clause, where you would take your RRSPs and buy credit for your past service in this new defined benefit public pension plan. People often make very little money on the interest on the contributions they make now. Other times, of course, they do very well. Some people would prefer the certainty of having most of their retirement income being based in defined benefit plans. This option would be very valuable to older workers who, through no fault of their own, were not able to contribute fully to the ORPP during their early working years, simply because it did not exist. It would also be of use to workers who, because of the exclusions and exemptions the government has included in this bill, spend part of their career unable to contribute to the ORPP.

When we think about how precarious work has become, with people having to work multiple jobs or spend part of their time self-employed, and how difficult the labour market has become for young people early in their careers, it stands to reason that we should keep the ORPP as open as possible and accessible to all Ontarians.

An RRSP transfer option could also be used to purchase past service credits. Unfortunately, this proposal for a buy-back of pension credit wasn't included in this bill for the new ORPP. That's very disappointing.

The pooling of pension plans was never followed through to a great extent, like the Harry Arthurs report suggested, which would have made small pension plans more viable. What happened to that idea? How far has that progressed?

The NDP, of course, supports a public pension plan for Ontario, but we want our public pension plan to cover the most people possible, and we want it to be in place as soon as possible. We think that this bill could be a lot better, and we certainly think the government could be doing a lot more to protect existing pensioners and pension plans.

In closing, I just want to say that over the years I have watched a North American corporate attack on pension plans, on benefits, on working people. The results have been terrible. An example is that in some of the southern states, the people that worked for the city—the police chief, the fire chief and all that, in some of the cities in Alabama and Mississippi—went to get their pension, to sign up for it, and found out it was gone. The corporation had used it, just to survive, because the contributions weren't made.

The regulations and restrictions on the payments into these pension plans are not strong enough. Some of these companies had access to parts of the pension plan over the years, to put it into the market to try to make more money, or to put it back into equipment and improvements to the plant. Instead of using shareholders' money, they used the pensioners' money. That was criminal. And now the pension plans are underfunded—go figure.

At Stelco, for example, we were funded at 72 cents on the dollar and it's dropping. If the pension plan at Stelco was wound up tomorrow, pensioners have already lost all their benefits—I have 80-year-old women in tears phoning my office. They've lost their dental, they've lost their pills, they've lost everything. Now they may go after—the worst scenario is that they could get 30% of their base pension. Some of the workers who are not 65 have lost their bridge, which will happen soon if they go bankrupt—that would be \$900 off their pension plan.

Where's the protection for the people who have spent their whole lives trying to build security and dignity in their old age? This plan is great for people in their twenties and 30s—it will help. It's not the end to meet all, but it certainly helps. But it certainly does nothing for the precarious workers. It does nothing for the terrible situation in our province, all the pensioners that are phoning me up, afraid. Some of them could live 10, 15, 20 years more, but on what? They're going to be on social assistance because they were robbed, deprived of something that they earned, or that their husbands gave their lives for or that they gave their lives for. It's a disgrace.

The sooner Canada and this province start protecting pensioners who earn those deferred wages and negotiated them fairly and honestly—until these governments start standing up to these corporations and say, "This isn't going to happen in Canada. This isn't going to happen in Ontario. We're going to stand up for our people. We're going to stand up for our people. We're going to stand up for pensioners, we're going to stand up for young people. We're going to make Canada and Ontario the place to live."

1550

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yvan Baker: There was a lot said about the bill by the previous speaker, the member from Hamilton. What I want to do is just to respond to a couple of key elements that I thought were important.

I think that there are a lot of elements of this bill that just make good common sense. First of all, the legislation confirms that pension benefits, contributions and the maximum earnings threshold will be indexed to inflation, so that plan members' benefits maintain their value for life. That just, to me, makes sense.

The survivor benefits portion, I think, is great. Basically, we're building on the success of the CPP by including a survivor benefit for plan members who are single. As a single person, I appreciate that very, very much.

When I look at the ORPP Administration Corp., as a business person, this is something that speaks my language. I think that it's really, really important. One of the things that is really important, especially when it comes to something so important as a person's retirement, is that the funds are managed responsibly and managed at arm's length, and that's what the ORPP Administration Corp. would ensure happens.

It ensures that the Administration Corp.'s broad responsibilities include enrolling members, collecting and investing contributions in trust, administering benefits and communicating with employers.

There would be a strong accountability and transparency framework. The board of directors and the management team of the ORPP Administration Corp. would be fully accountable to plan members.

Again, these are just best practices in pensions and retirement savings policy, so we're applying these here to make sure that it's at arm's length, transparent and accountable, and that people know where their funds are being invested and that they're being invested responsibly.

The last piece of the bill is that it ensures plan sustainability.

Again, these are all elements that lead to prudent management of retirement savings, and they ensure that the people who are putting their savings into the ORPP know what they'll be able to get in return when they retire.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: As we know, the benefits for this Ontario pension we're told will start to be paid out in the year 2022. However, to receive the maximum benefit, you have to pay into it for 40 years. As the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has pointed out, for those of us in the baby boom crowd and anyone who is thinking of planning for retirement, there's really not much here in the way of benefit.

We know right off the top that, commencing next year, both the employer and the employee pay in 1.9% of gross earnings. We know that that is close to a brand new, additional 4% tax. It's bad for business, Speaker.

This spring, I had an opportunity to talk to a large number of businesses: storefronts, welding shops, manu-

facturing. By and large, people are pushing. Things are not going that badly down my way in many sectors, in spite of high taxes, high electricity, the red tape and the cost of labour. But there is a big concern. They do know what is looming. They know that there will be a very significant cost from this newly created Ontario pension program.

I've just come from a meeting with the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario and local constituent Dennis Howden. They made it very clear that their membership does not support the planned ORPP. It's going to be a big hit. This is small business; this is Main Street business. This is going to have very serious ramifications for storefront operations like our insurance brokers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's always good to listen to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek because he actually has a lot of years of experience on the pension file and is passionate about getting it right. On this side of the House, I think we have some very legitimate concerns, which he articulated, as to some of the gaps in the efficacy of the plan that has already been pushed down the laneway, if you will, right out of the gates. The inconsistencies in the plan actually cause us the most concern, because, of course, we are supportive of a universal pension plan for the people of this province. That's why we brought forward a motion back in 2010 asking the government to go in this direction. At the time, they did not support it, so we did lose some time.

We've also recently just lost another year. As the member mentioned, back in January 2006 the finance minister stood in this place and said, "We have a mandate from Ontarians, and they can't wait any longer for increased retirement security." But I guess they can. I guess they can wait another year, because in February 2016, in the legislation, it was announced that the first phase of contributions would begin in January 2018, not in 2017, as previously promised, which was, of course, a win for some of those stakeholders in the business community who have some concerns about this government's ability, I think, to bring in an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan with some integrity.

There are many, many outstanding questions. Who's going to manage this plan? Who will be benefiting from this plan? Who's excluded from this plan? What does a comparable plan mean in the context of a provincial plan going forward?

I want to thank the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for articulating all of those concerns. This debate is obviously ongoing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm pleased to rise again this afternoon to speak to Bill 186, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act. Earlier, I spoke on this issue.

I would like to give a few comments to the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, who initiated the latest round of discussion on this. He raised concerns with

regard to our commitment to providing retirement security for all Ontarians. I think there are many areas where we have agreement on this issue, and chief among them is the desire to see workplace pension plans extended to more workers across Ontario. When you've got two thirds of workers in Ontario who do not have a pension plan, we do need to address this.

The ORPP is going to ensure that workers are going to have the benefit of retirement security. We know that with the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security, there's hardly enough that's paid out to our seniors for them to live on, and the ORPP was designed to address that.

We want to see our seniors live in dignity and to be active members of our community when it comes to our economy. If they're going to have more money in their pockets, they're going to be out actively spending and participating.

What's important to note is that this pension plan is going to follow workers from job to job and from career to career. I think that is very responsive, when you look at the way young people are living and working today. So this is a plan that is designed to meet a changing workforce. It is responsive in that way.

Again, there is agreement, I believe, with members of the third party, who have said positive things about the ORPP—that we need to provide better retirement security, that this is an important priority in Ontario. So we look forward to receiving their support on this.

I know that I will be supporting the ORPP, as will members of my party. I've heard some comments from the opposition, but I believe that when you look at the benefits of this, it is the right thing to do for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's four questions and comments. Now we return to the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek for his reply.

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, I'd like to thank the member from Etobicoke Centre, the member from Haldimand—Norfolk, especially the member from Kitchener—Waterloo with some good points, and the member from Kitchener Centre. Certainly, I have respect for my colleagues in the House.

I'm not quite sure where the member from Kitchener Centre was coming from when she said it's going to benefit seniors. It's going to do absolutely nothing for seniors for probably 40 years. There's nothing, not a penny, for our existing seniors, for existing pensioners. That is a total fallacy. The only people it's going to help, maybe, are my grandkids—maybe—and we're not quite sure that that will be managed properly either.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: When they're seniors.

Mr. Paul Miller: I hear comments coming from another person who's just reading the Liberal notes as usual and doing their piece. That's understandable because they're directed to do that, but if you really take a hard look at it—and I've taken a look at this for probably 15 years; I don't know if you can match that—I can tell you right now there are so many holes in this it

looks like a piece of Swiss cheese. But the bottom line is that I would never stand in the way for any possible future enhancements to people's income. That's why we're supporting it, not because it's a good bill. We're supporting it because something is better than nothing. But it's as close to nothing as you're going to get.

1600

I can honestly say to you that it's going to be a lot of administration costs before there's anything paid out. I don't know where you're coming from over there, or if you really understand this bill or what's going on, because with all due respect I don't think you do. I do believe you're doing what you're told to do and asked to do, but I think if you really take a look at it—

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: And that applies to the minister who is mocking me over there, too; he knows darn well. If he knew anything, he knew that this is no good for 50 years. He knows it. If he says any different, I'm sorry folks, you're getting a line of you know what. I think it's called malarkey.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to be sharing my time today with the Attorney General and the member for Kingston and the Islands on Bill 186.

I have six or seven minutes, and I can only make about three or four points here today. I wanted to begin by just talking about this pension legislation in the context of what it means as a member of a government to bring forward legislation like this.

We all know that governments—we've been fortunate and I've been fortunate, since being elected in 2003 to represent the riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, to be in government for all of that length of time, going on 13 years—can be transient and that you don't always win the next election. We know that people see the civil service and the bureaucracy as the constant in our democratic exercise.

Sometimes because of that paradigm, governments are seen as not making or developing policy choices in the long-term interest of the people that they're elected to serve. We know and have been criticized—all governments get criticized for making what are seen or are purported to be by members of the opposition sometimes, or by members of the public or the media, short-term decisions that sometimes would be framed as being in the political interest of the government of the day.

I think it's important for me to start—and I only have six or seven minutes—by saying that clearly no one, whether you support the pension plan or you're opposed to the pension plan, can make the comment that we're bringing forward legislation here today that if passed is going to have some short-term benefit for the government. People are standing up on the other side of the aisle and criticizing this plan because it won't have benefit for two, three, five, 10 or 20 years, but I think that speaks exactly to my point that we are bringing forward a piece of legislation that we know will build over time and that

the benefit comes farther down the road. It makes my point that there is no specific short-term, near-term political interest in the government doing this, but that it's a government that is doing it, whatever you may think, because they believe it's the right thing to do.

I think it's important to remind people that this was not our choice. I can remember being in this Legislature years ago listening to Dalton McGuinty, when he was the Premier, calling on Stephen Harper and the federal government of the day and asking them—I could go back as far as 2008 or 2009, I believe is where it started, when the recession hit—to enhance CPP. That request went on incessantly for month after month, for year after year, and you can all pass judgment. My point is not to pass judgment on the decision that the federal government of the day made, but clearly they decided that they didn't want to do it. They thought, I suppose, that \$12,500 a year at maximum—not what people get, but at maximum—from CPP was good enough.

Speaker, it's important to remember that this is not a tax. Some will frame it as a tax. Please, we all know it's not a tax. This doesn't come into consolidated revenue. It's set aside. It's deferred benefits for people. This idea that they thought \$12,500 was enough, I guess—fine. We'll leave it that. There have been no increases to CPP in Canada for a very long time. The average draw from CPP for people in Canada is somewhere on the order of \$6,500 to \$7,000 a year, and it has been that way for a very long time. I offer that as just some backdrop as we discuss what we're doing and why we're doing it. We have been asking for an enhanced CPP for a very long time, and it just simply never happened, and so here we find ourselves. If you're defending the status quo at \$12,500 as a maximum and you're defending an average of \$6,500 nationally, well, so be it; that's your position.

Speaker, I want to offer a couple of comments; I only have one or two or three minutes left. The NDP and the muted, tempered support that now seems to be in place—they're now saying that they support this pension piece, and they're still finding the opportunity, when they speak on this, to criticize us on a variety of other factors. So I think I need to make the point that if they're supporting it today, I'd ask them why they didn't support it in 2014, when it was contained in our budget. There are still many people who wonder out loud why the NDP would not have supported—

Interjection.

Hon. Bill Mauro: It's okay, Speaker, we're good—would not have supported a budget that contained a pension plan, that contained a minimum wage, that contained increases for personal support workers—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would just ask the House to come to order so that we can hear the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry make his comments. Please stop interrupting him.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Thank you, Speaker.

It was an incredibly progressive budget in 2014, and while they say they support it today, they didn't support

it then. Why? Well, a pension plan wasn't so near and dear to their hearts in 2014, when they thought, based on metrics, that the government would be ousted and perhaps they'd end up as the government or as the official opposition. It didn't matter to them then, but apparently it matters today. So when they stand and criticize not only the pension but find the opportunity to speak and criticize a whole bunch of other things, I need to remind people that this apparently wasn't so important to them in 2014.

To the Conservatives, who are in opposition, I would say just once again: An enhanced CPP was our preferred choice. I remember very clearly multiple requests for enhancement to the CPP. If people think that \$12,500 at maximum is good enough, if they think that \$6,500 a year an average is good enough, then so be it; that's their position. They can stand on that, and they can defend that. But clearly we don't think that's the case. That's why we're bringing this forward. We preferred an enhanced CPP. That couldn't happen. We couldn't do that on our own, and that's why we find ourselves here today. Speaker, I thank you for the time, and I yield the floor to the Attorney General.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Attorney General.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Ça me fait plaisir aujourd'hui de parler sur le plan de pension proposé du gouvernement de l'Ontario. Je pense que ce plan-là ne pourrait pas arriver assez tôt.

Chez moi, régulièrement, je rencontre des personnes qui sont vraiment insécures à propos de leur avenir. Ils ne savent pas ce qui va se passer. Ils savent une chose : qu'ils n'auront pas assez d'argent pour prendre leur retraite. C'est pourquoi, aujourd'hui, on voit les gens retraités qui reviennent sur le marché du travail. Après quelques années, ils s'aperçoivent, avec l'argent qu'ils ont mis de côté et les intérêts qui sont si bas aujourd'hui, qu'ils ne peuvent pas continuer à vivre sans s'inquiéter tous les matins, à savoir : « Est-ce que je vais avoir assez d'argent pour continuer la qualité de vie que j'avais lorsque j'étais au travail? »

Alors, in my community, I hear it regularly when I go door to door. And whom do I hear it from? I hear it from women who have been retired—they are over 60, 65 or 70—and live in social housing because they don't have the income they wish they had to have a good living and a good quality of life. They know that this pension plan is not for them. This pension plan is not for me, but we, as a government, have to think for the future. We should not think about tomorrow: "Am I paying into this pension plan and will I be a 100% beneficiary of this pension plan?" No. As a government, we have to plan.

1610

When I read that three quarters of Ontario workers aged 25 years to 34 years do not have a workplace pension plan—when I hear that two thirds of the workers don't have a pension plan—it's just a tsunami coming our way. So as a government, we have to plan to make sure that those who don't have a pension plan now will have one.

Yes, our number one choice was an enhanced CPP, but it's not there. It may be coming, but it's not there. We have asked, and as my colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan just talked about, we have been talking about it for the past 10 years. We have been talking about it with the federal government. Especially in the previous federal government, there was no appetite, because they saw a pension plan as a tax.

My father would be 95 years old today, and he didn't see a pension plan as a tax. The advice that he gave to his kids was, "Go and work for the government, because you will have a pension plan." Because at the time, yes, most of the people that had a pension plan were those who were working for the government. For him, a pension plan was very important, so he would be disappointed because there are only a few of us that work with a pension plan, and like you said—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Not in this place.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: —not us as MPPs.

They went into the private sector and they are business persons, so they have raised their own pension plans.

But the CPP is not enough. We would like to see an enhanced CPP.

On behalf of my grandmother, my mother and the women around me, I hope that this pension plan will pass, because our children and our grandchildren will be able to benefit from a pension plan.

A pension plan is not a tax. Only the Conservatives call that a tax. It's not a tax; it's an investment in the future.

I hope that we will all review this ORPP. I want to thank the minister, who worked very hard to develop that. I hope that in this term of office, we will see the ORPP in place for the benefit of those two thirds of employees who don't have a pension plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Kingston and the Islands.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'm very proud today—je suis tellement fière de parler en faveur du Bill 186, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

As the Premier and the Associate Minister of Finance said time and time again—and the other ministers and speakers have spoken of this today as well—two thirds of Ontario employees do not currently have a workplace pension plan, and many are not able to save enough to provide for their own secure retirement. This is why the ORPP was created.

I do want to spend just a minute as well to thank both the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry and the Attorney General for focusing on the long-term benefits of the plan. Those benefits do indeed live outside of the confines of an electoral cycle. We are looking after the people of Ontario and the future of those seniors.

Along with my colleagues, I'm very supportive of improving and strengthening the CPP. The CPP provides Canadians with a secure pension that is predictable, indexed to inflation and paid for life. Ontario has been a leader in advocating for an enhancement to the CPP. However, CPP enhancement needs a consensus, as we

know, from two thirds of the provinces, representing two thirds of the population—a long and complex process.

In the meantime, it would be irresponsible of our government not to move forward with our own plan to ensure a more secure retirement for the people of Ontario. Fortunately, our new federal government is ready to collaborate with us to streamline that administration and find potential cost savings for the implementation of the ORPP. We are also designing the ORPP to integrate with an enhanced CPP if it is one day achieved.

Mr. Speaker, I support Bill 186, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, because it is a critical leap forward in our commitment to deliver greater pension coverage and adequacy for Ontario workers. Bill 186 enshrines the key plan design details of the ORPP in legislation, which were created after comprehensive consultations with businesses, unions and non-profit organizations all across the province. I'm pleased that the ORPP continues to be developed in full consultation with businesses to ensure that any potentially negative impact on their operations is minimal.

I want to thank the Associate Minister of Finance, who took the time to visit my community of Kingston and the Islands and meet with members of the Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce to hear their concerns and ideas on how the ORPP can be strengthened and improved.

This bill provides employers and employees with the time and the clarity that they need to prepare for the launch of the ORPP, with enrolment starting in January 2017 and the collection of contributions phased in, starting on January 1, 2018.

As the government has also previously outlined, Ontario workers participating in comparable plans will be exempt from participating in the ORPP. We recognize that there are good registered plans that exist, and our focus is on ensuring that those without plans can also have access to financial security in their retirement.

As a former business owner, I'm always mindful of the challenges and pressures businesses face, and I have spoken at length with many business owners in my riding of Kingston and the Islands. We've discussed that the ORPP should be seen as part of our overall economic plan that also aims to foster a dynamic business climate, create jobs and grow the economy, particularly, in the future. There are specific initiatives led by the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure to reduce unnecessary regulatory burden, spur innovation, and help businesses grow their operations and compete in a global economy.

I also want to make it very clear that pension contributions will not form a part of government revenues and that the government will not determine where and how contributions are invested.

To support transparency and accountability regarding plan sustainability, the government is committed to introducing legislation this fall that would establish an office of the chief actuary. This office would provide the government and the ORPP AC with expert and impartial advice and guidance.

This bill will bring us one step closer to our government's goal that all Ontario workers are either enrolled in the ORPP or a comparable workplace pension by 2020, which will provide Ontario workers with a predictable stream of income paid for life in retirement.

I strongly believe in promoting the interests of Ontario's businesses while helping to build a more secure retirement future. While I continue to support a federal CPP enhancement, the likelihood of that happening remains uncertain. Meanwhile, initially, the ORPP would expand pension coverage to more than three million working Ontarians who do not currently benefit from a workplace pension plan.

Mr. Speaker, I can't tell you how close to my heart this plan is, this bill is. After spending some time in a federal constituency office before having the honour of coming here and serving as the member of provincial Parliament for Kingston and the Islands, I spoke with many senior couples. On occasion, one of the partners has passed away. They are reduced to trying to figure out how to live on \$6,500 a month. That is not enough money. CPP is not sufficient to sustain seniors in their future years, in their retirement. It is just not working.

1620

I've heard today that there will be some support coming from the opposition, and I'm very, very pleased to hear that. I do encourage all of my colleagues in the House to support Ontarians and vote in favour of Bill 186.

Merci beaucoup. Thank you. Meegwetch.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, I will comment on the recent presentation by the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry and a similar point that was made by the Attorney General. They talked about the enhanced CPP and indicated this was their first choice. This was their preference. So by definition, obviously, this Ontario pension that they are now proposing is their second choice. This is not their preference.

I guess we can see why their new-found partner in the federal government is not coming through, to date, with an enhanced CPP that, obviously, would make a lot more sense than this Ontario pension starting from scratch, something that so many citizens in the province would not see full benefit from for another 40 years. We do see a failure here in provincial-federal relations: the failure to achieve an enhanced CPP that, at minimum, is preferable to what we're debating this afternoon.

One reason it would be preferable—and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business talks about this. They've indicated that the ORPP represents a 40% increase in pension payments that they would be currently paying, for example, through CPP. So regardless of whether it's CPP or ORPP, or whether you call it a premium, or whether you call it a tax or investment or savings, one thing is clear: It's a major subtraction from employees' paycheques and a major subtraction of gross earnings of business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's always interesting to hear—I mean, there are some members across the aisle who genuinely believe that this plan is going to do what it says it will. I have no reason to question them.

But when the Minister of Natural Resources stands in his place and says that in the 2014 budget, this plan was a key part of it and, of course, we did not support the government at the time—we didn't support the government at the time because there were 6% cuts in every ministry, with the exception of four. There was also a long track record of broken promises on auto insurance, on home care, on youth employment strategies.

We did get the FAO, though, out of that negotiation. Of course, we didn't know that the government wasn't going to listen to the FAO.

So there were very good reasons. Just for context, Mike Harris had 5% cuts in every ministry. This government had 6%. When Mike Harris did it, they were burning him in effigy on the front lawn of Queen's Park. So there were a lot of reasons to not support that budget.

One of the major pieces was, of course, energy. I don't know if you saw this, Mr. Speaker, on the weekend. The Globe and Mail did an editorial, and they said, "Coming Soon: Ontario's Green Energy Fiasco, the Sequel." We've seen this coming for so long that it's incredible—the fact that Ontarians have overpaid for electricity to the tune of \$37 billion between 2006 and 2014 and will continue to be overcharged by another \$133 billion by 2032.

It was an unsupportable budget. It's not the pension that we objected to; it was the pure and utter incompetence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There's still time for some more questions and comments.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a point of order. I was just testing everybody to see if you were listening, but I made a mistake in saying that the CPP was providing \$6,500 per month. It was per year.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Members can correct their own record on a point of order.

Questions and comments?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Well, we are having a very lively debate, aren't we, this afternoon on Bill 186, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act. I'm up again, speaking on this very important issue that matters to me and to you and to people who are watching at home. Retirement security is something that affects every single person in this province. Again, I'm very pleased to be part of this debate today.

I'm so happy that our Minister for Natural Resources did get up and respond directly to a comment that had been made by the member for Hamilton East-Stoney

Creek. He had some critical comments that he directed toward me, in particular, and our party. I did not have the opportunity to respond to him directly, but I'm glad that our minister did respond to him.

That member of the NDP is concerned that older workers are not going to have the immediate benefit of the ORPP. But as the Minister of Natural Resources stated quite emphatically—he made a very good argument—this is an investment for future workers and this is a plan that has to have a starting point.

Interjection.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: The other option was doing nothing. Would you rather have us do nothing? That is untenable. So we are doing something.

As you've heard many times today, the CPP and Old Age Security are not enough on which to live, and you heard my colleague, the member from Kingston, talk about that. I would have to agree with you. Imagine trying to pay your bills and trying to get by on just over \$6,000 a year. You add the Old Age Security to it and it's not very much.

I know when I was knocking on doors, Mr. Speaker, during the last—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize. I would ask the House to come to order, please. We're in questions and comments.

The member for Kitchen Centre has the floor.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I know when I was knocking on doors, voters in Kitchener Centre asked me about this, and they pushed me for this. That's why I'm delivering, and I'll be voting in favour of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the speeches from the Minister of Natural Resources, the Attorney General and the member for Kingston and the Islands.

I think it was the Minister of Natural Resources who was talking about when benefits might flow from this. It's certainly not going to help people near retirement because the first payments would come out in 2022. To get the full benefit, you would actually have to pay in for some 40 years. So, obviously, that's a long time.

I come back to the question of why not, at least, try to expand the CPP. We heard, I think, from the member of Kingston and the Islands saying that we need two thirds of the population of Canada to be able to do that. Well, Ontario is one third, so it doesn't seem to me to be that great of a challenge, and that's what this government had talked about as being their first choice.

I would say that that's a better choice versus hiring the new administrator and paying \$520,000 and then hiring communications people and paying large sums of money and creating a whole new bureaucracy. I met with the insurance brokers this morning, and the group I met with said, "Would you really want to give this money to the government with the track record that they have for looking after money? Wouldn't you rather have the

choice to look after it yourself?" I would say that that is a very real choice.

There are a number of ways you can save money at the current time with RRSPs, with TFSAs and with pooled RRSPs. If you give individuals a choice to manage their own money, then they might want to use the extra money they have and put a down payment on a house. Generally speaking, the housing market does pretty well over a long time. It's probably going to do a lot better than this ORPP. But with the government making the choice for people, they won't necessarily have that down payment to be able to buy the house and then see the house appreciate. So people could end up worse off with this bill, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One of the government members can respond: the member for Kingston and the Islands.

1630

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It really is a pleasure to again provide some last-minute comments.

I want to reiterate that it's really important that we think outside of the electoral boundaries when we think about this act. We need to make the investments in the future for future generations who are retiring.

One of the members of the opposition said there would be even less money to put towards their own pension plan, but the fact of the matter is that this will go towards the pension plan and it will provide for their future. They're not putting money away now for that pension plan. That's the whole point of this legislation: that two thirds of Ontario employees are not putting money away for their pension plan.

It's incorrect to call it a tax. It has never been a tax. Nobody ever gets retirement income from taxes that they paid. It just seems to me to be an effort to mislead the public, and I don't think that's an advisable thing to do. People resent being spoken to in that way.

I think it's really important that we look at this bill and invest in our future, that we make difficult decisions to plan for future generations to make sure that every single senior has the opportunity when they retire to live a comfortable life. There's nothing like listening to seniors who come in to the office, who cannot provide for themselves and who, when a spouse dies, have to move out of their house because they can't live on \$6,000 a month.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Bailey assumes ballot item number 45 and Mr. MacLaren assumes ballot item number 73.

Further debate? You're not going to believe it: the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I know I'm one of your favourites, and that was just why you were struggling to get that out of there.

Mr. Speaker, a pleasure to stand and speak today to Bill 186, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act. Who

wouldn't support a bill that suggests someone is going get a retirement plan? The rhetoric out there is that they're trying to believe and spin to people that they're going to have—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Rhetoric.

Mr. Bill Walker: Rhetoric even more—that they're actually going to have a pension plan next week, if they could get away with it. At the end of the day, no one is going to say that they don't want this. If you're out knocking on doors and you ask a simplistic question, "Do you want a pension plan that's going to be paid for?", of course everyone is going to say yes. Although the interesting thing is, Mr. Speaker—and I believe you went door to door—I don't think this was ever an election platform question that came up before.

Before I get into my official notes, the other thing that I think was just mentioned—my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka asked a very valid question: Who would trust this Liberal government to manage their pension funds if they actually had a choice? I think that would be an interesting question to ask at most doors, considering that they've actually doubled the debt in their 13 years in government. They have the worst record in history, and they spend more money on debt and deficit than most of our actual ministries get. I'm going to talk about that a little bit more in my remarks.

I believe that at the end of the day, the best way for Ontarians to have a strong and secure retirement is to have a strong and secure job or employment—jobs which many people are suggesting this piece of legislation puts at risk. The government's own document shows we would lose another 50,000 jobs because of the ORPP. That's half of my riding's population. It's a significant loss for our great province.

We have a number of groups coming out. I'm hearing unequivocal concerns from my constituents in Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound about the timing and affordability of the mandatory pension plan.

The Owen Sound Chamber of Commerce has stepped out and said they cannot support this \$3.5-billion payroll tax. As my astute colleague from Perth—Wellington sitting beside me today said, "Any money coming into the government is a tax." Regardless of what you want to spin and call it, a tax is a tax is a tax, and this is nothing more.

There's a united message being delivered by businesses, from the smallest member of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the CFIB, to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, Magna International, Canadian Tire and Fiat Chrysler CEO Sergio Marchionne, saying that this is definitely not a direction to go. That is someone who has the ability to influence a lot of jobs in our province, in our country and across the world. I think that what we need to do, at times, is listen to some of the experts who are out there and understand where they're coming from. All the groups I just mentioned, with the exception of the Liberal government, agree that this is an unacceptable burden at this time.

It is a payroll tax. Even the government admits that the provincial economy won't fully recover from the shock

of the ORPP for 20 years. So again, why are they rushing ahead to do this, based on rhetoric? It's not like someone is going to get that pension plan paying out for them tomorrow. In fact, most people are suggesting it will be at least 40 years—20 years, minimum—before most see it, 40 years for the full benefit they talk about.

One colleague across the aisle was talking about not being able to live on, I believe she said, \$6,000 a month but then stood up and corrected her record, which was admirable, that she meant \$6,000 per year. But I then have to ask: If they're that concerned about people with \$6,000-a-year income, why do they continue to double and triple hydro rates? Every time we ask them about that, they continue to find other ways to spin it and say, "We're the best and we're the lowest in North America and everything is rosy and it's all good." It is not rosy. Mr. Speaker. This is yet another burden on the people of Ontario, particularly our small and medium-sized businesses, although large businesses will be impacted as well.

Disposable income and private investment will decline, and household spending isn't forecast to recover until 2040. Mr. Speaker, think about those pages in front of you. By that time they'll actually be in the workforce and paying some of the taxes. They'll be the people who are starting to worry about their retirement, and they're not going to be spun off on this rhetoric of a plan that is going to pay everybody out and treat everyone in the way they believe they want to be treated. It's just not reality. Someone has to pay the piper on these things, and at the end of the day we have to be honest and sincere with people and tell them the true story.

I remember the Premier standing up numerous times in this House criticizing former Prime Minister Harper for not buying into this plan—not doing it. Now they have the "sunny ways" Prime Minister, yet I don't hear that they're going to do that. In fact, there are other Premiers asking them to step back: "Don't mess this up if we can enhance the CPP. It's already in place. We don't have to double the bureaucracy; we don't have to put another whole administration and machinery in there if we can enhance it."

Again, I'm not certain why the government, who were criticizing the former Prime Minister for not allowing that to happen—in fact, they were pushing him to make it happen—seem adamant today that they're going to continue to steamroll this bill through. I don't understand, Mr. Speaker. They've got whom they want in Ottawa now—in fact, the Premier spent much of her time campaigning for the new Prime Minister instead of dealing with Ontario business—yet, at the end of the day, they're not pushing today's Prime Minister the same way, even though a number of her colleagues across the country are asking her to do that.

This government has given no assurance that the pension plan will benefit Ontarians as intended—40 years before they actually get the full benefit of it. No one is going to argue if you ask them the simple questions: Do you believe you deserve a pension? Do

you want a pension? Do you think you need a pension to have a better retirement? Absolutely, no one is going to argue that. But at the end of the day, what is the hit to the economy today? What is the hit to our business sector today? Who is coming to our province, and who is leaving our province, as a result of a lot of the challenges this government is putting in place?

How do you justify the plan when everything is predicated on too much risk, when so much loss is expected? To the contrary, as I mentioned, the government's own study and findings into this plan show that too much risk is involved. I ask again, Mr. Speaker, and I believe you might have said in your deliberation, who can trust this Liberal government to manage the finances after the track record they have shown over the last 13 years?

We have to also factor in the lacklustre economy and our behemoth debt, the largest in the country, at \$294 billion, and actually projected to go to \$308 billion—unbelievable. You begin to understand why the Liberals are having such a hard time spinning and selling this policy to the people who truly are out there on the front lines trying to make a go of it in business.

Despite public opposition and warnings from the business community, the government maintains that it knows best yet again. They told us that about the Green Energy Act. “We’re going to have these wonderful 40,000 jobs,” I think they said somewhere. I don’t think we’re anywhere close to that. At the end of the day, they said about the gas plants, “It’s only going to be a \$40-million mess-up.” What was it? I believe it was \$1.1 billion. So if we’re a little bit hesitant to believe when they state some of these things, part of it is that they have to stand there and look in the mirror of their own track record.

1640

The government maintains we should trust them with our tax dollars. Again, Mr. Speaker, I say to you, there’s not a tax they haven’t loved. I think a number of years ago—I can’t remember the exact year; maybe someone in the House can help me—they made a commitment that said, “We will not raise your taxes.” Then they said, “We will not implement a health tax.”

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: In 2003.

Mr. Bill Walker: In 2003. Thank you, my esteemed colleague from Perth-Wellington. I knew you’d be all over it.

They said in the campaign, “We will not implement a health care tax.” The next year after they took power, we had a health care tax, which remains in place today.

They’re talking about a number of different things—the cap-and-trade that they’re going to bring in—and again, no certainty of where that money is going to go. In fact, many believe that it’s actually going to go to their general coffers. It’s not going to go even to fight for the environment and climate control, as we have talked about this in House.

I have very serious concerns with this government and where they’ve taken our province in their 13 years and where they continue to go down that line. As of today,

Mr. Speaker—and you know this as well as I do—this government spends \$11.4 billion every year just on interest payments. Just think of what we could do if we had that \$11.4 billion in the bank. Then, when people come into your office and my office asking for special drugs for their children, when they ask for health care services—today, I brought in a petition about closing schools. We keep hearing from the minister that education is better than it’s ever been. Well, you tell that to the educational assistants that you cut. You tell that to the people with autism that you cut. You tell that to the special-needs students who don’t have the ability to have special education assistants with them like they had just a year ago.

You tell them, the people that are actually losing their schools in small, one-school communities. There is no alternative. Some in my riding have more than one in a community and they’re amalgamating. Meaford had a great announcement last week, and I’ll applaud the government for that. That was a wonderful thing for Meaford. But there are five schools getting closed in my riding as we speak, and another round of cuts will come next year. They committed to address the funding formula two elections ago at least, and maybe a third before I got elected, and yet they’ve done nothing with that. So it comes back to trust.

I’m going to go back to the \$11.4 billion that they spend every year on interest payments because of the debt and the overspending that they have accumulated in their tenure. For much of the history of our province, we didn’t have the level of debt we have. In their 13 years, they’ve doubled that debt. They’re putting those pages in front of you—and all of the young people out there—at risk.

They keep talking about retirement. What about the money we’re spending that we could be putting into some retirement programs, if we didn’t have \$11.4 billion in interest payments? That’s more than this government spends on the whole community and social services sector, the people most in need. And yet, they’re okay with adding more debt and more interest payments and not helping out those who truly are in need. It’s more than it spends on post-secondary education. In fact, it’s more than all ministries, except health and education. I don’t know how anyone on that side of the House can come out with yet another budget when they continue to go down that path and think that that’s okay, that they’re not doing a disservice to the young people that are going to come along. My children—and hopefully, someday, grandchildren—and these young pages in front of you are going to be the people that suffer even more as a result. There are lots now. Our front-line health care services are getting cut. Our front-line education systems are getting cut. They seem to get away with all of these nurse cuts and with the schools closing. We don’t see a lot of backlash in the media, which I find interesting.

We need to live within our means. We need to make sure that we’re not passing on that debt load to the next generation. I think you referenced your grandchildren

that are going to bear the brunt of the decisions that they're making today. The Liberals got to us in this financial pickle because of 13 years of incompetent budgets, overspending, mismanagement and scandal. Mr. Speaker, just for those people at home that may not follow as closely as you and I do here every day, I'm going to reiterate a couple of those, just to make sure that people understand a little bit of historical context, to understand why this really bothers me so much.

We had eHealth: \$1 billion was wasted. Gas plants: Again, remember, they told us, even after they got caught, that it was going to be a \$40-million issue, but it was \$1.2 billion wasted on gas plants, while the people of Ontario have got not one iota of power. Ornge: a half a billion dollars. SAMS: My colleague, again, from Perth-Wellington brought that issue up. It's over \$300 million and still is not providing the service to the people most in need the way it should. Time after time, the Liberal government's projects have been a complete failure.

With regard to SAMS, the government invested \$300 million into a case management system that clearly was flawed from the beginning. I was the critic back when that SAMS fiasco came upon us, and I asked very directly the question, "Are you sure this is going to work?" They actually did delay it for a little while because they thought there were going to be some flaws. And yet, when they were ready to push the go button, they still did it knowing that this was not going to work. They miraculously found \$50 million to pay overtime to the municipalities that got saddled with most of the front line. It's not typically the minister who is answering all those questions; it's the front-line people in our municipalities. It's interesting that the government, with the flip of a switch, found \$50 million to bail their own scandal out, and yet, when I ask for special drugs for children, we get a no. When we ask them for more needs, like our special education assistants, it's, "No, we don't have any more money." They dumped millions more to fix that defective system.

Now they want to run roughshod over our retirement savings. They're trying to plant in people's minds that they're going to have this windfall, that there's a money tree out there that's going to spit out retirement cheques to every single person in our great province of Ontario—and I'd be one of those people who would love to do that. But as my mom told me, someone has to pay all the bills. She worked for next to nothing for most of her life, and yet I didn't go without because she stuck to the moral principle of "I pay within my means. I only buy the things for which I have money. I'm not going to put a whole bunch of debt on and be the benefactor today but saddle someone else." Sadly, this government is doing way too much of that.

I hear a lot from businesses. In my riding, we don't have a lot of large Magna types or a GM or a Ford, like some of my colleagues in Oshawa and other places. I have a lot of small and medium-sized businesses, mom-and-pop shops, a lot of contractors, a lot of people running a little general store, just trying to make a go of

it. They're telling me, "Bill, this is going to be one more thing that hampers my ability to maintain all the employees I have. In fact, I'm probably going to have to let one of them go because, with the red tape, with the rising cost of energy and with this new tax, I'm just not going to be able to continue to make a go of it." There have to be people in the Liberal caucus who hear very similar things from their constituents. This isn't necessarily a PC person talking to me; it could be a New Democrat, it could be a Green voter, it could be a Liberal voter. It's across the board. I'm hearing it from all over the place. High taxes, high cost of energy, continual red tape and more administration are making it very much a difficult place for business-people to be.

And then there are the people who are the employees. I'm not certain that many of the employees out there understand, or that it has been articulated to them: 1.9% is coming out of their back pocket. If you're struggling now to pay the hydro—lots of us have discussions in this House. We have lots of people coming through our doors saying, "I can't afford to pay my hydro bill anymore." Where are they going to find the 1.9%? I believe, if I'm not mistaken, that hydro rates just went up again yesterday—another \$37. So we're going to miraculously find 2% out of their incomes? We hear all this talk about—I think you say it a fair bit—precarious work conditions, Mr. Speaker. I'm not certain how we figure that these people in precarious work conditions are going to find another 2% to put into this mandatory program—and they billed it that this is who is going to get the benefit out of it. At the end of the day, I'm very concerned about those people who don't have enough now. They live paycheque to paycheque.

It's very disconcerting when you hear the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the chambers of commerce and business-people saying, "This is not the thing to do. This is a job-killing tax."

They will even, to some degree, admit across the aisle that this is the wrong thing to do, because of the cost.

We believe that all Ontarians deserve strong and secure employment, which then leads to a strong, secure retirement. Many people are not feeling that confidence. They're very worried. There are companies that are leaving. There are companies that are coming to me and saying, "Bill, I was thinking of expanding my business." But do you know what? With all of the things that are going on, particularly the hydro rates, particularly with more tax—they're starting to get very worried about where this cap-and-trade is going to go and what the true impact is going to be at the front line. They're very concerned. They're concerned about the cost of food going up. Certainly, heat is going up, and insurance. Their kids are graduating with high debt and low job prospects.

Youth unemployment in Bruce-Grey is a staggering 21%—the highest in the province, I regret to say. This is not going to help them. This is not going to create more employment and give people the ability to say, "I want to remain in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and work. I want to

stay at home,” which I’ve been fortunate enough to be able to do. I’ve lived in my own riding my whole life.

1650

We have the highest rates, the fastest-rising rates, of any province or state in North America with our hydro. I keep going back to a couple of the members who spoke prior to me talking about how these people can’t afford to live on \$6,000 a year. How are those same people paying their hydro rates? It keeps getting sloughed off by the minister, by the Premier, by the finance minister, that everything is rosy and all is good. It’s not rosy and good.

I want to bring in, just in my closing, the cap-and-trade again. It’s very concerning out there that the Minister of the Environment is suggesting that a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is going to cost a lot of money. It’s going to cost the private sector and it’s going to cost the public sector money. Finally, he at least has admitted that. Before it was all rainbows and, “Everything is wonderful. The world is good.”

I heard today that on Twitter he actually suggested that we’re not going to have nuclear in 10 years. I can’t fathom it. Their government just committed to the rebuild, the refurbishment, of all of our nuclear units, which provide half of our energy in Ontario, and at six cents a kilowatt hour or seven cents a kilowatt hour with the new—and the jobs they provide. Think of the pensions that are paid in that industry, and he’s suggesting they’re going to be gone in 10 years? How is he going to do this? There are no emissions from nuclear. He wants to get rid of nuclear and the good-paying jobs, and we come back to the pension plan.

Where does the money come to pay for this pension plan? They’re selling off Hydro One, a \$750-million net revenue source, even though 85% of Ontarians suggest that we don’t want that. I’m not certain where all the money is going to come to pay for this pension plan. We’ve got lots of opposition from people suggesting it’s not the right thing to do. I would certainly encourage the government to go back to pushing the federal government to enhance the CPP and not mess that up so that they won’t do that.

With taxpayers now that can barely afford Liberal policies such as the skyrocketing hydro rates, the government’s cap-and-trade slush fund and now the ORPP, I plead to the government opposite, the Liberals: If you want to bring dignity and security to Ontarians’ retirement after a lifetime of hard work, let them have the ability to have jobs and to have lower costs so that they actually have some money left to invest in their own retirement. That’s the best way. Let people manage their budgets.

I have to say this, Mr. Speaker: Their financial management track record is certainly not stellar. I would leave it up to the people to have a choice of where they invest their money.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for questions and comments, I want to thank the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for his kind assistance.

Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It’s a pleasure to rise in response to the comments from the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. Certainly he articulated a very thorough critique of Bill 186, the ORPP act. Within that critique, I did find some common ground with many of the issues that we on this side of the House have raised, many of the concerns that we have highlighted in connection to this bill.

Foremost among those is the need to recognize the CPP as the preferred option to ensure the retirement security of Ontarians, and also the potential negative consequences of not modelling the ORPP as closely as possible to the CPP, because any deviation, any inconsistency, any discrepancy between what is being proposed in Ontario with the ORPP and the hopefully future expansion of the CPP could make that expansion very difficult. It could make the integration of the two plans unnecessarily complex, and it could therefore compromise the retirement security of Ontarians.

One of the biggest concerns we have about the ORPP that has been proposed is its lack of universality. There are far too many Ontarians who are going to be excluded from this act. We would have much preferred to see a universal system that would include everyone regardless of whether they are covered with a workplace pension plan or not, and regardless of the type of plan they have in place. We know that workplace plans do not guarantee retirement security, and neither will the ORPP.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I’m very proud to rise in the Legislature today to speak to Bill 186. As the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has rightly pointed out, pensions are indeed about people. It’s our responsibility as government to take action when we see an issue that’s on the horizon. The fact is that two thirds of Ontario workers today have no workplace-based pension plan. If you look at younger workers, only one in four young workers has a pension plan.

I was at Studio Y, a place for young, innovative social entrepreneurs. In my conversation with those young leaders, many of them have said that they have never been offered a pension as part of any workplace conversation. So when we look out on the horizon, if we don’t take action, that is of concern for us, because people will retire without adequate income and without that security that they need in retirement. With the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act (Strengthening Retirement Security for Ontarians), 2016, should it pass, we are ensuring that over four million workers in Ontario will have the added benefit of a workplace-based pension plan through the ORPP.

Speaking to the concern about coverage, we have looked at where the coverage is needed, and that’s for those workers without pension plans at work. If they have a comparable plan, they are exempt, because it’s deemed that they have adequate coverage. If they do not have a comparable workplace pension plan, then they will be part of the ORPP. For the self-employed, for

federally regulated employees, we will continue to press the federal government to ensure that we can give them an option to be part of this plan as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I listened with interest to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. The previous member from Durham would be proud of this member, of the amount of words he can get into a speech, his word count. If Mr. O’Toole—I think I can call him that—was watching today, he’d say, “Give ’er, Bill,” or “Give ’er, member.”

It was interesting. I remember a while ago when the Associate Minister of Finance decided to have a round table in my riding of Perth–Wellington. The problem is, she just didn’t invite anybody to go to it. At the last minute, there were a couple of people that I know—I believe it was the night before, there was an email sent through that said, “We’re coming to town. You can come to this meeting.” When they got there, there was nobody invited from the business community except for these two people. They thought, actually, that they were at the wrong meeting; they didn’t know until the discussion got going. I guess where I’m going with this, Speaker, is that there was nobody there to talk about this thing and get the truth about what this ORPP was about.

It’s certainly difficult for people in my riding to understand why a government would introduce something like this and say they’re going to manage the account when they have a difficult time managing anything else. They’ve had a difficult time managing the energy sector, with the scandals of the past that the member Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound mentioned. So why would we trust a government to take more money from my constituents and from the people of Ontario and to manage it in a way that they claim will be of benefit to Ontarians? It’s very unbelievable.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened intently to the remarks from the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound regarding his views on the pension. I was enjoying listening to the member. I don’t agree with everything he says, all the time, but I always enjoy listening to him.

Every time I think of this bill, I think of that TV commercial where the guy has to take that running jump over the stream and that bridge. That commercial describes this bill exactly. Because unless you’re 25 and in really good shape, you’re never going to make it. You’re just going to topple into the stream. That’s the first thing I want to make clear with this.

The second thing is, we agree with the pension plan. There could be some changes, but I also would very much like to echo the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound: There are a lot of people in this province who just don’t know how to pay for it. Specifically, in rural Ontario, they can’t afford to heat their houses with electricity now. There’s no 2% there. That’s an issue that we have to come to grips with. That’s an issue that this

government owns, probably with some help from the Conservatives, but they own this. How are these people going to continue?

1700

Talking about pensions: It’s so pie-in-the-sky for a huge amount of Ontarians, hard-working Ontarians, people who work now or people who have worked their whole lives who are on a fixed income now who should be enjoying their pension years. The cost of living in this province, specifically in rural Ontario, is far outstripping their wildest—I was going to say “dreams,” but a better word would be “nightmare.” What are these people supposed to do? This debate is so pie-in-the-sky for so many people.

Does everyone need a pension plan? Yes, but how are they going to pay today’s bills?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound can now reply.

Mr. Bill Walker: It’s my pleasure, and thank you to the members from London West, Perth–Wellington, the Associate Minister of Finance and, of course, my friend from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

I’m going to focus a little bit first on the Associate Minister of Finance. I know that in her remarks earlier today she talked a lot about her grandma and her grandma telling her to always put money away for the future. I’d like to ask her how she grapples, when she goes to work every day and epitomizes a government that continues to overspend and put debt at levels that we’re never going to get out of for the next generation—I wonder what Grandma would say if she knew that she was voting to continue to go down that path. We’re setting a very dangerous precedent.

She talked about responsibility. Part of that means having to listen to stakeholders like the CFIB, like the chambers of commerce, like big business. The Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario do not support it because they were actually asked and they put in a proposal and said, “We want to ensure that you allow group RRSPs because that’s a good, viable alternative to be part of for people’s retirement,” and they turned it down. So they didn’t listen.

She talked about taking action. They are trying to, again, sell a bill of goods. My colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane, I think, called it the right thing: It’s a leap of faith that you actually believe that you’re going to get this. You have to be 25 and in very good shape to think that you’re going to have money at the end, particularly if they run out of assets to sell, like Hydro One, and keep spending the way they do, because at some point, the bank will come calling. It will be a living nightmare.

People truly are out there struggling to pay their bills. They don’t have money in the bank at the end of the day, so where are they finding this 2%? All businesses aren’t making these huge profits that a lot of people like to think they do. They’re struggling to keep it all together.

This government has the highest debt and the highest hydro rates in the continent. If they want to really help

people take action, start taking responsibility, start being accountable for your actions; lower those costs across the board and ensure they actually have more money, so that they then can make choices about their own retirement and their own investments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's been a lively debate this afternoon, which I've actually enjoyed because this is an incredibly important topic for the people of this province. There are, of course, some very differing views on the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

I want to just take a different tack, though, today. I want to talk about work. The nature of work, if you will, and the emerging trend or the entrenched trend, if you will, of precarious part-time contract work is part of this debate because of the changing nature of work in the province of Ontario, which has largely been overseen by this government.

I'm going to quote a couple of things, and one is very, very current, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if you saw this, but it was in the commentary from the Toronto Star, and it has to do with "Ontario Labour Laws Failing Vulnerable Workers." These are the people we're really talking about. These are the workers this government talks about and sort of waves the ORPP flag as the solution for these people.

However, within the context of the world of work in the province of Ontario, we have outdated labour laws which "do little to remedy the dramatic power imbalance that exists between well-heeled company owners and their employees." This is the title from the commentary.

I would be remiss if I didn't raise the issue of the Fresh Taste Produce company that operates as the Ontario Food Terminal, and these are 12 Tibetan workers who are entering one week into a strike as they fight for their very first collective agreement. Why is this important? Because almost every one of them is a refugee who came to Canada after a decades-long flight from persecution that left their families stateless. They're not accustomed to having the law on their side, but their stories are similar to many people who seek asylum and new opportunities. And yet the promise of being a protected worker in the province of Ontario is turning out to be a very false promise.

These workers are immigrant workers. They start their warehouse shifts while the city sleeps, sorting the produce you find at all of our grocery stores. Their wages are from \$14 to \$17 an hour. The opinion piece goes on to say that some have worked there for 19 years without an increase in pay. "Without a union, many haven't had a raise in nearly a decade, and all of them earn wages well below the other workers at the terminal..." This is the nature of work where you have people who are doing the same work side-by-side and working at different rates.

But, of course, "last November, these workers took the bold step of voting to join a union."

It was a process that should have ended with a contract, but, no, not in the province of Ontario. And "after

five months of seeking wages, benefits and pensions on par with their counterparts, they are still without a first contract. Their only recourse was to go on strike, while the law allows their indifferent employer to simply bus temp agency workers past them to do their jobs."

How can these people, who are just fighting for some basic rights as workers in the province of Ontario, even think about contributing to a pension?

This is the trend. "The use of replacement workers undermines what little leverage the law gives employees and the hardship of strike pay wears at their resolve. With no automatic mechanism to bring both parties to an arbitrated settlement, callous employers can simply play the waiting game."

We saw this with Crown Metal Packaging, which the op ed by Chris Buckley, from the OFL, actually references.

This is "a frequent scenario that illustrates just how little Ontario's outdated labour laws can do to remedy the dramatic power imbalance that exists between well-heeled" companies and the influx, and the increased nature, of precarious employees who work for them.

So this is the context, and these are the people that we have to keep in mind as we talk about an Ontario retirement pension plan.

The other one that I pulled out because of this debate is a Toronto Star review of public sector workers in the province of Ontario. This came out just before Christmas of this year, and it's entitled "Public Sector Workers Feel Sting of Precarious Jobs, Data Shows."

This is a growing trend within the government of temporary work undermining public services, so there's a direct correlation between the government as an employer and the nature of the services that the people of this province receive.

There was an extensive review done by one company, one business here. They did a blitz, actually, and they found that three quarters of Ontario's companies are breaking the law around precarious work, around contract work, around not honouring the rights of those employees.

To see this trend play itself out in the very government that stands in this House and says, "We will not stand for precarious and part-time and contract work," but yet they are part of the problem, is unconscionable. If this government wants to address the issue of people not having enough money to save for the future, then they should stop undermining the very people who are delivering the public services in the province of Ontario.

"Despite its vow to tackle precarious employment"—this is a direct quote—"almost half of the Ontario government's own job postings last year were for temporary positions...." This was data obtained by the Toronto Star.

"In a province where around one third of all jobs are insecure"—one third—"a full 44% of the 10,682 jobs posted and filled at Ontario ministries ... were temporary or seasonal, according to documents accessed" through FOI. This is how we actually get information around there.

Of note, this excludes students. These are not students. These are not seasonal positions.

1710

"Six ministries hired more temporary than permanent employees last year, including correctional services, community and social services, and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities." I think it's atrocious that the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is part of the issue of precarious employment.

"Of the 300 job postings for provincial correctional officers, not a single position was permanent."

How can this government in good conscience, in clear conscience, say that these workers are supposed to be contributing to a pension plan when they can't even pay their bills? They can't get work, even within the government.

"Critics argue that jobs that once provided a sure path to the middle class are now leaving more and more workers unable to access benefits or pensions.

"They argue the large volume of temporary positions is creating onerous turnover and training costs."

Jessica Sikora, who is a caseworker at the Ministry of Community and Social Services and a young workers' rep with OPSEU, says, "It's a quadruple whammy.

"It means there is no training. It means morale is down. It means those people cannot necessarily focus on the work they're supposed to be doing. And that also means they are less likely to make the decisions that are most economically effective for the government." So these people are focusing on surviving in the province of Ontario. They're not focused on saving; they're focused on just living day-to-day.

This report went on to say that of the 63,444 people in the government, only 53,000 of those are currently full-time.

"Critics argue temporary contracts are increasingly being used simply to avoid long-term commitments to employees."

You see, there are two sides of the coin on the pension debate. People have to have consistent, well-paying, safe jobs in order to contribute to a savings plan of any nature.

Ms. Sikora goes on to say, "My experience is that it has become close to impossible to enter into the government of Ontario as a permanent employee." This is a trend that we have seen, actually, in the workplace in the private sector, but it's unconscionable that it's also part of the government's plan to outsource and contract out to save money when it actually compromises the level of services that we see.

It says, "While temporary positions may often serve as a foot in the door, many workers—especially young ones—end up in a 'cyclical situation where they're in a job interview forever.'" These are the people we need to keep in mind.

"All it really does is allow the employer to try people on for an extended period of time almost in a paid internship."

Finally: "Temporary workers in the public service do not receive a pension, benefits or paid holidays." I'm not

sure if government members know how bad it is, actually, on that side of the aisle.

The other side of this as well is that last year, temporary caseworkers at the Ministry of Community and Social Services were hired at double the rate of permanent ones. The Star's analysis showed that "while there were 42 permanent caseworker positions created, there were 84 temporary hires." So it's a one-to-two ratio.

"The more turnover and the less experienced your staff, the more inefficiently (services) are being delivered." This makes sense, right?

Also: "When you work in a situation where you provide a front-line service, you have to be compassionate to the needs of the member of the public you are serving. And that is going to be that much harder to do if you're thinking, 'I don't know if I have a job next week.'" That's a very powerful quote from a worker in the public service, especially as we're dealing with this whole issue and, quite honestly, debacle with the SAMS contract.

Not only are these people just temporary workers coming in and dealing with very stressed-out clients because a computer program that was supposed to modernize the Social Assistance Management System—which was completely messed up by the company that was hired and contracted out to do the job. We overpaid by almost \$300 million, and then that company just got another contract for \$32 million to do the work to fix the problems that they created. Then we have people in your ministry—the minister has just entered—that are part-time, contract, precarious workers doing the work who are incredibly stressed out. These people are not thinking about saving for a pension plan. These people, as I mentioned, are really focused on trying to survive.

Finally, Sheila Block, who is a senior economist at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, said that providing good public sector jobs should be part of government's efforts to reduce precarious employment. Of course, we agree with that. "If we have a government that's committed to reducing inequality, we should expect that its actions meet its words."

A lot of this research actually was done by the Toronto-based Workers' Action Centre.

They have demonstrated a link between job security and overall well-being. "For example, a recent analysis by McMaster University and United Way showed that middle earners in precarious jobs have poorer mental health than even low-income workers in secure work."

Finally, "Earlier this year, the Star revealed that the government spent millions of dollars on contracts"—this will be good—"with temp agencies that its own inspections found to be violating the Employment Standards Act."

Now, I just need to reiterate that. This government is talking about securing long-term savings for retirement for the workers in the province of Ontario. The first place you start is by creating an economic environment where people can actually earn a half-decent living and where

the government should be leading in this regard. We see that the government spent millions of dollars on contracts with temp agencies that its own inspections found to be violating the Employment Standards Act. That's the nature; that's the culture that we are dealing with in the province of Ontario.

There is this general sense out there that the ORPP is a moving target. We saw that, actually, when the minister had said that Ontarians can't wait any longer, and then, a few months later, "Well, they can wait one more year. One more year: That's fine."

Language is really important, I think, in this regard, because the associate minister talks about "contemporary mobile employment." You can't make precarious, part-time contract work sexy. It just cannot be done. You can call it contemporary mobile employment, but that still means that you don't know where your next paycheque is coming from. That still means that you can't plan for the future regardless of the provincial strategy. Those workers are still trying to figure out if they are eligible, because when the plan was first rolled out, they were told that every employee in the province of Ontario would be part of the ORPP by 2020. In February, in the last budget, now we're talking about "eligible employees." If part-time, precarious, contract workers in the province of Ontario are not considered eligible, then 44% of the employees in the province of Ontario will not have an ORPP.

Finally, just on the nature of work and the breaking of the law, this is from a Metro news article from January of this year: "A Ministry of Labour inspection blitz focusing on precarious employment has found 78% of workplaces in violation of the Employment Standards Act." The violations of employment standards, it says, are becoming part of the norm.

In this battle in the province of Ontario—because it plays itself out outside of this building—you have workers who are trying to fight for their rights as employees. You're having workers that are trying to find stronger regulations around safety. You are trying to find workers that have a way to speak up. But "many precarious workers are too vulnerable to speak out about abuse." Most of these people are young workers and they are new immigrants. Quite honestly, Mr. Speaker, it is an unacceptable model that "the ministry's enforcement of employment standards still relies predominantly on individual workers coming forward to make claims against their bosses."

Well, if you are a part-time employee, new to Ontario and living on the margins of society as it is, for you to speak up and not think that you're going to get fired is in large part why a lot of these crimes—because they are crimes; they are violations of a piece of law—do not come forward. One of the young men who actually had the courage to speak up against an employer said, "It doesn't really make sense that a regulatory system is set up like that.... The onus can't be on the worker who we already know is marginalized."

Let's keep these workers in mind as we talk about the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, because—while there

is obviously this tension in the province of Ontario between those large corporations—they did win a one-year reprieve, and there are some people who are quite honestly happy about that—it is so important to get this pension plan right, to make sure that these vulnerable, marginalized workers are not left out of the so-called shared prosperity. Right now, they're just trying to survive the so-called sharing economy, which really is not so much about sharing at all.

1720

A lot of people have written about the ORPP, and a lot of them have been very critical of the plan. One came from the *Globe and Mail* in January 2016, by William Robson: "Notwithstanding these announcements"—which keep coming fast and furious; more announcements—"and much advocacy pro and con, the government has published no numbers about the operation itself. How much savings would go in. What investment return it would earn. How much the ORPP would cost to run. The dollar value of benefits out. The basic business plan"—because there isn't a basic business plan.

While we are, obviously, supportive of a universal pension plan, we have serious concerns about the management of this plan and who will be running it. It was a little bit surprising to listen to who the government hired to do that, the former Pan Am fellow, which quite honestly didn't seem like the best choice of leadership, if you will.

But just to go back to the numbers—I only have a minute and a bit—if you compare the ORPP based on the numbers to the CPP, the CPP's contribution rate is 9.9%. Its retirement benefit is about 25% of the earnings it covers. The federal Chief Actuary's projections show that, working with real returns after expenses of 4.0% annually, the ORPP's 3.0% contribution would be less than two fifths of its CPP counterpart, yet its 15% payout would be three fifths of its CPP counterpart, which implies net returns much higher than the CPP. However, it is unlikely that the ORPP will outperform the CPP, so even the numbers—the government hasn't released them. This is actually a best guess, or speculation, if you will.

But when you put this into context, because of government deficits and massive health care commitments, younger Ontarians are already on the wrong end of huge intergenerational transfers. It does not calm our concerns on the ORPP. In fact, we have many outstanding questions of it going forward, and we have a question of integrity of the plan moving forward so that it actually serves the people that it was designed to help.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to comment briefly on Bill 186, which is going to help bring the ORPP, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, get one step closer to being a reality.

I'd really like to congratulate my colleague the Associate Minister of Finance, who has done a tremendous amount of work figuring out the details of exactly how this plan will work. There's a huge amount of detail in

figuring it out. She has figured out things like the details of the benefits, the contribution rates, what survivor benefits look like and all the details around what qualifies as a comparable plan because—I'm sure you heard from some of the same people in your const office what I heard in mine—there was a lot of conversation around what's comparable and what's not comparable. So there was a lot of detail to work out there.

One of the things I'm really pleased about is the way in which an independent administration corporation is being set up. I want to make it clear that the pension plan isn't part of government revenue; it isn't some pool of money that the government's going to play around with. It's actually going to be like the teachers' pension plan—a lot of people are familiar with that—or OMERS, the municipal employees retirement plan, which are administered by arm's-length administrative corporations with a great deal of expertise, and what makes those plans so successful is the fact that they have independent expert administration.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: We just heard the member from Kitchener–Waterloo talk about precarious work, part-time work, contract work, the kind of work we see in the kitchen trade, the restaurant trade, the retail trade, small business.

During the finance committee hearings with respect to this Ontario pension, CFIB—the Canadian Federation of Independent Business—came forward to testify. They indicated that “as a small business owner, you either have to take from your payroll, meaning reducing your labour force, or you have to pass it on to your consumer, meaning raising prices. If you keep raising prices you're not going to be competitive and you'll be out of business pretty soon.” Hence, there is a link between imposing this on small business and the issue of precarious work and part-time work.

Here's the position of the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association. Many of the employees in that organization are involved in part-time work, contract work. According to the association—this is referring to the Ontario pension—they describe it this way: “A disaster—it will be a disaster. The industry is struggling right now.”

The Retail Council of Canada, again representing precarious work, estimates the ORPP will cost their members \$20,000 to \$30,000 a year. You subtract \$30,000 from one of their member businesses, and that would represent one employee, or that could represent perhaps two part-time employees.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to congratulate my colleague the member for Kitchener–Waterloo for her excellent speech. She provided some very valuable context about the changing world of work, context that is helpful to understand the importance of this debate that we are having.

Speaker, this morning I asked a question during question period about unpaid interns. We know that there are 100,000, and as many as 300,000, unpaid interns in Canada. Just as the member for Kitchener–Waterloo had reported about violations of the Employment Standards Act—flagrant violations of the Employment standards Act—with all kinds of marginalized workers, so are unpaid interns exploited and taken advantage of in workplaces across this province. Unpaid interns are not paid any salaries; they are not receiving any wages whatsoever. They will not see the benefit of this ORPP in any way, shape or form.

Another point that she made was about the public sector and about Ontario no longer maintaining its responsibility to be a model employer in providing full-time, stable, secure work.

We know that many senior women end their years in poverty, but currently, women tend to be more represented in RPPs because of public sector jobs. As we see more and more public sector jobs being lost and as we see the government moving more and more to precarious employment relationships, contract work, part-time work, we will see women who will be harder hit than others in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Dearly beloved, we are here to get to this thing called a pension.

Speaker, I have to say that, listening to my honourable colleagues from the Conservative side, their solution to a pension was, “Why not just sell the real estate or one of those extra properties that you might be harbouring or cash out some GICs or maybe use that large inheritance? That will get you through your expenses and your monthly commitments.”

1730

I'm not really sure what world they're living in. Having done the research and having been advised by outside bodies, as the NDP very rightly acknowledges, we have identified that approximately two thirds of Ontarians—those in the workforce—do not, as of this moment, have any form of pension whatsoever. With the coming greying of the country, of which I am an example, with the tsunami proportion of retirees exceeding folks in the new workforce, we need to provide and use our capacity as government stewards of the public purse to help, to enable and to empower individuals to have a pension.

Of course, there is an extraordinary amount of detail that's attached: Will it be defined benefit, will it be defined contribution, what existing pension plans will qualify so there is no duplication?

Yes, we are certainly very pleased—I'm interested, by the way, to hear how the Conservatives opposite have turned into Stephen Harper apologists. I would encourage you to keep on that line of thought. Having said that, we are very pleased, not only that we have a federal government and the Honourable Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, but now we can actually get phone calls returned and

meetings planned with them to help amalgamate, should that be the case. But Ontario needs to move ahead with the ORPP.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes questions and comments. The member for Kitchener–Waterloo may respond.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the Minister of Education, and the members from Haldimand–Norfolk, London West and Etobicoke North, with a little bit of a call-out to Prince, I think.

What I was trying to get to is that the government is trying to solve a problem that they won't be able to solve until they address the nature of the precarious part-time contract work that is the new reality for the people of this province. That is part of the debate, and it has to be part of the debate. I want to remind them to keep in mind the 12 Tibetan produce pickers who are refugees, who are fighting for their rights to a free collective agreement so that they can actually earn a living, pay their rent, support their families and, yes, save for retirement.

It is time to restore balance and fairness to Ontario workplaces, and there are many people across this province who are calling on this government to overhaul the Labour Relations Act and make it fair for everyone.

I also just want to point out that there are some inconsistencies out there around the ORPP. When the finance minister puts out a release saying, "Our goal is for every employee in Ontario to be part of the ORPP or a comparable pension plan," but then a couple months later says, "Today's announcement brings the government closer to achieving its goal of ensuring that every eligible employee," the language is important.

We view "broadening ownership" very differently than this government does. We see "transformation in health care" very differently than this government does. I just want to go back to the point that the "contemporary mobile employment" the deputy minister talks about is not sustainable for the people of this province and will not ensure that people can save for retirement in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Transportation and the member for Etobicoke Centre.

I want to speak briefly to Bill 186. Look, our government has made the ORPP one of the pillars of our economic plan. Why have we have done that? Well, we believe that every worker—every worker—deserves a secure retirement—I emphasize "every worker" and "secure retirement." The plan will close the retirement savings gap for over two thirds of Ontario employees who do not have a pension plan. This gap is even worse for younger people. Three quarters of Ontario workers 25 to 34 do not have a pension plan. That's why we are going to introduce the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

Bill 186—the plan—is a critical leap forward in our commitment to delivering greater pension security coverage and adequacy for Ontario workers. It enshrines

the key plan designs in the legislation. The bill also provides employers and employees with the time and the clarity they need to prepare for the launch of the plan, starting in January 2017, and for the collection of contributions, which will be phased in starting January 2018. Passing the bill will bring us one step closer to our government's goal that all Ontario workers are either enrolled in a plan or a comparable workplace pension plan by 2020.

Let me give you some of the details of the plan. The plan will provide workers with a predictable stream of income for life in retirement. Ontarians will be eligible to begin collecting benefits in 2022. The plan is designed to provide plan members a 15% income replacement rate after 40 years of contributing to the plan.

A member would be eligible to begin collecting a benefit at 65, with an actuarially adjusted benefit as early as 60 or as late as 70. The amount of money an individual receives from the plan after they retire would depend on how many years they contributed to the plan and their salary throughout those years.

The legislation confirms that pension benefits, contributions and the maximum earnings threshold would be indexed to inflation, so that plan members' benefits maintain their value for life.

Similar to the CPP, the legislation also outlines a survivor benefit. We've built on the success of the CPP by including a survivor benefit for plan members who are single. What this means is that someone who is not married can designate a beneficiary of their choosing.

I do want to say something about the comparable plan exemption because we've heard a lot about this. As we previously outlined, Ontario workers participating in a comparable plan will be exempt from participating in the ORPP. We made this decision because we recognize that there are very good registered pension plans that exist, and our focus is on ensuring those without plans are able to access financial security in retirement.

So, Mr. Speaker, what is a comparable plan? Here is what a comparable plan is. Comparable workplace pension plans are registered pension plans that meet a minimum benefit contribution threshold:

(1) defined benefit plans with an annual benefit accrual of at least 0.5%;

(2) defined contribution plans which have a minimum total contribution rate of 8% with employers contributing at least half that amount. Voluntary contributions would not be applicable for the purposes of the plan's comparability test;

(3) multiple employer pension plans;

(4) pooled registered pension plans when available in Ontario. A pension contribution threshold will be set for PRPPs.

Let me say a few words about the administration of the plan. The bill reaffirms our government's commitment to ensure that the plan is managed at arm's length from the government. The plan's broad accountability responsibilities include enrolling members, collecting and investing contributions in trust, administering bene-

fits and communicating with employers, members and other beneficiaries.

There will be a strong accountability and transparency framework. The board of governors and management team of the plan will be fully accountable to plan members.

The corporation itself will hold all contributions in trust for the benefit of the members of the plan. That is a very important feature, and I'll say it again: The corporation will hold all contributions in trust for the benefit of members of the plan. They will not form a part of government revenues, and the government will not determine where and how contributions are invested.

1740

Let me say a few words about plan sustainability. The government has designed the plan to be sustainable over the long term. The act would establish a formal funding policy to guide the actions of the plan and the government in the event of a funding shortfall or funding excess.

To support transparency and accountability regarding plan sustainability, the government is committing to introducing legislation this fall that would establish the office of the chief actuary. This office would provide the government and the plan with expert and impartial guidance and advice in the administration of the plan.

Speaker, I've tried to outline the need for the plan, the details of the plan and the accountability provided in the plan. I think if we consider those three things—the need, the details of the plan and the built-in accountability of the plan to the members—and the very important fact that all contributions will be held in trust, government will not touch those contributions for its purposes.

I think this is a good plan. This guarantees income security for all those Ontarians who worry about their future security.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm delighted to have the opportunity to speak this afternoon on Bill 186. It is always a challenge, I think it needs to be recognized, to speak following the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. I want to thank him for his contribution to the debate this afternoon, and also for his consistent eloquence in defence of all that is good and progressive here in the province of Ontario. As he mentioned, we'll be sharing some of our time with the member from Etobicoke Centre—interestingly, a community in which I grew up before I moved to Vaughan many years ago. So I'm looking forward to hearing our other colleague's comments on this important bill.

Earlier today, I had the chance to respond for a couple of minutes to one of the opposition members. I believe it was an NDP member who had spoken out, expressing grave concerns with respect to some elements of this legislation. At that point in time in my remarks, I had the opportunity to pay tribute to both the Premier and the Associate Minister of Finance responsible for the ORPP. I think it's important to repeat and emphasize that we are

moving forward with this critical component of our plan, of our agenda, that for many years to come, for generations, will help support thousands and thousands of people across the province because of the foresight and the leadership of Premier Kathleen Wynne and Minister Mitzi Hunter, who has been directly responsible. In that capacity, as per her mandate letter, the associate minister travelled to literally every corner of this province and met with business, met with the advocacy sector, met with so many others, and consistently was told that there needs to be something done on this critical matter that we are facing.

The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs did speak to some of the specific details that are to be found in the plan. I'm not going to repeat some of those specifics, though it is crucially important for us to understand the mechanics of how the ORPP will function.

When we had the debates here in the chamber itself and over the course of the last couple of years since we went to the people of Ontario in 2014 and asked for a mandate to deliver on retirement income security through the ORPP, what we heard consistently was that it is—and I've heard it in my own community of Vaughan, in York region, from a number of individuals who experience the challenge currently, in the seniors' clubs that we have in Woodbridge and Maple, and thousands of others across my own community who expressed that because, historically, we haven't had the foresight to undertake this kind of work, to embark on this kind of endeavour, they face some very serious challenges in their lives.

One of the things that's often overlooked in this place is that we have to give consideration to those who will come after us—not just serving as members of the Legislature, of course, but those who will live in this province, as I said a second ago, for generations to come—to make sure that they have the capacity to support themselves and to support their community, and to support our economy, frankly. From my perspective, this is not just sound social policy; this in fact, in the long term, is very sound financial or economic policy as well, and that's something we shouldn't forget.

It's also interesting, from my perspective, to listen to members of both the Conservative caucus and the NDP caucus when they get up—and I understand that this is just naturally part of the cut and thrust of debate that occurs here in the Legislature, as it should. Obviously they have concerns about the legislation, a lot of specific questions are being raised that have been answered already by the minister and members of the governing caucus and will continue to be answered through the rest of the legislative process.

The one thing in particular, to both opposition caucuses, that I would remind them of: I get the role and I understand the importance of a robust opposition in the legislative process but, sometimes, on matters that are of such critical importance for the future well-being of our province, I think that we all have to remember, as the saying goes, to not let the perfect be the enemy of the good. The ORPP, frankly, is far more than just good; it's

actually tremendous in terms of being able to continue to move the yardsticks forward.

So I would say to members of the Conservatives and the NDP caucuses to remember that, as we work on these kinds of undertakings together, we have to think, as I said earlier, about where we're going to be not just this year, but where we're going to be over the next couple of years, where we'll be over the next couple of decades and looking forward to that point in time. Because I know, as I said earlier today when I had a couple of minutes to respond or ask questions of one of the previous speakers, that when you think about how we can best position ourselves to make decisions today so that, in the future, we not only continue to have a flourishing middle class in this province that we continue to support, but how we can continue to expand the middle class and give those who live here in the province today who are working—one of the speakers in the Conservative caucus—it might have been the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound—earlier today repeatedly referenced the pages who sit near you.

Interjection.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It was that member.

It's a critical point to remember: that we are making decisions in this chamber on a regular basis that will help them, in turn, support themselves, their families and their communities over the next number of years.

I talk often, in the speeches that I have the privilege to give as Minister of Transportation and MPP for Vaughan, about my own children, my daughters who are eight and five years of age, and where they will be in a decade when it comes to the infrastructure investments, the hard transportation and other critical infrastructure investments we're making.

But this is also an infrastructure undertaking on the part of our government for their future. It's why those on this side of the House speak so passionately, so consistently and so eloquently, as the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs did, about this: because we recognize that it is extremely important for us to get it right. It's extremely important for us to make sure that the ORPP is nimble enough to support that brighter and more prosperous economic future and, at the same time, help support the existing businesses that we have in this province that need to continue to flourish so they can employ more people and they can help us, in turn, leverage that for that brighter quality of life that we are all here to deliver for the people of Ontario.

Again, I recognize that members of both opposition caucuses will have their questions and their concerns—it's exactly in keeping with what they should be doing—but I would just say on this one that, at all times, a little bit of recognition that we are moving the yardsticks forward on this in such an important way on such a critical topic. I will hope, of course, as I often do, because I'm an optimist by nature in this place, that we can work together on something like this. I think we'll look back in 10, 15 or 20 years and recognize that the ORPP was not only, again, very sound social policy, but extremely important economic policy for the future of Ontario.

With that, Speaker, thank you very much for giving me the chance to speak this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's a pleasure to join the debate on this bill and to follow the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the Minister of Transportation. I'm proud that the Minister of Transportation grew up in my riding of Etobicoke Centre. I didn't grow up in Vaughan, but I had the opportunity to work in Vaughan for a number of years, so I returned the favour to the minister.

One of the things that I wanted to do in the remaining time was to share a story about why I think this piece of legislation and the ORPP are important. Early on, soon after I got elected, there were a number of constituents who came to see me to talk about a range of issues. In my community, as I've mentioned in this Legislature before, I have quite a large population of seniors, so people who are retired or are about to enter retirement.

I remember one constituent in particular who came to see me. She was still in very good health, but well into her eighties, and she was talking about how she was simply running out of savings. She had had employment, she had saved for retirement, but she didn't have enough. It was very sad. She was talking about how she was having to sell her home to generate the cash that she needed to be able to survive.

That story, in particular, sticks out in my mind because—she would have been earning CPP, but when I think back to the time when the CPP was created and the current CPP regimen was put in place, I don't think we anticipated that people would be living as long as they are or that the cost of living would be what it is today. It doesn't accommodate the needs of people who are retiring in this day and age, and it's certainly not accommodating those people who are going to be retiring when the Minister of Transportation's children are retiring, as he noted.

So I think that securing retirement savings is a really important initiative, and this bill helps support that. It helps make that a reality.

I agree with what the Minister of Transportation was saying: I think we will look back on the foresight of our Premier and this government in taking on the issue of retirement savings. We'll look back on this, just like we'll look back on the infrastructure investments, and say that it took a lot of political courage but it was the right thing to do, and it changed the lives of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people in the long term.

The bill that we're debating here today, obviously, supports the implementation of the ORPP. There are a couple of things that I want to speak to in my remaining time, and one of them is how it's being set up in a way that is transparent and also at arm's length. Through this bill, we create the ORPP Administration Corp. This ensures that this body is managing the contributions at arm's length from the government. I think that's really important for people to note and understand. Their responsibilities include enrolling members, investing

contributions in trust, administering benefits and things like that—basically, managing the savings that people have put into the ORPP. I think that's really important.

The other piece that I think is important is that there's accountability, a transparency framework and approach. That ensures that the administration corporation, which is managing the money of those who have entrusted their savings to this corporation—that they have a view and an ability to oversee what it is that the administration corporation is doing with their funds. I think that's a very, very important thing.

When I think about my experience in business, some of the most important elements of ensuring good governance—not the only ones—are transparency and direct accountability, and that's what this does.

Another piece of governance that's really important is making sure that you alleviate conflicts of interest. By having this managed at arm's length, you have a group of people who are professional, who are experienced or

qualified, but also whose focus is to deliver for those people who have entrusted their savings to the plan.

The other piece that's important to highlight is the fact that this bill supports the sustainability of the ORPP, by establishing a formal funding policy to guide the actions of the administrative corporation in the event of a funding shortfall or excess. This is just prudent financial management, and I know from my business background that this is really important.

In a nutshell, Speaker, we need to help people supplement their retirement savings, and to do that, we need to have good governance, transparency, accountability and arm's-length implementation. That's what this bill supports.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1754.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiles, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brook	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Scarborough–Rouge River	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith, Monique Taylor
Glenn Thibeault
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yvan Baker
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Toby Barrett, Han Dong
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Peter Z. Milczyn
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Lisa Gretzky, Ann Hoggarth
Harinder Malhi, Jim McDonell
Eleanor McMahon, Lou Rinaldi
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Cristina Martins
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
Robert Bailey, Wayne Gates
Monte Kwinter, Marie-France Lalonde
Amrit Mangat, Cristina Martins
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Randy Hillier, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Laurie Scott
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Steve Clark
Granville Anderson, Robert Bailey
Steve Clark, Vic Dhillon
Sophie Kiwala, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahon, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Chris Ballard, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Joe Dickson, Jennifer K. French
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Lorne Coe
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Marie-France Lalonde, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Continued from back cover

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

William Shakespeare	
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	8951
Minimum wage	
Ms. Jennifer K. French	8951
Community beautification	
Mr. Han Dong	8952
Autism treatment	
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	8952
Transportation infrastructure	
Mme France Gélinas	8952
Craft breweries	
Mr. Lou Rinaldi	8952
School closures	
Mr. Bill Walker	8953
Doctors	
Mr. Shafiq Qaadri	8953
Consumer protection	
Mr. Yvan Baker	8953

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Door-to-Door Sales Prohibition Act, 2016, Bill 193, Mr. Baker / Loi de 2016 interdisant la vente de porte-à-porte, projet de loi 193, M. Baker	
First reading agreed to	8954
Mr. Yvan Baker	8954

MOTIONS

Private members' public business	
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	8954
Motion agreed to	8954

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Education Week	
Hon. Liz Sandals	8954
First Responders Day	
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	8955
Education Week	
Mr. Patrick Brown	8956
First Responders Day	
Mr. Rick Nicholls	8956

Education Week

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	8957
-------------------------	------

First Responders Day

Ms. Jennifer K. French	8957
------------------------------	------

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Hydro rates

Mr. Ted Arnott	8958
----------------------	------

Gasoline prices

Mme France Gélinas	8958
--------------------------	------

Landfill

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	8958
--------------------------	------

Employment standards

Ms. Peggy Sattler	8958
-------------------------	------

Unaddressed mail

Mr. Arthur Potts	8959
------------------------	------

School closures

Mr. Bill Walker	8959
-----------------------	------

Hospital funding

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	8959
-------------------------------	------

Health care funding

Mr. Jeff Yurek	8960
----------------------	------

Privatization of public assets

Mr. Wayne Gates	8960
-----------------------	------

Ontario Drug Benefit Program

Mr. Randy Pettapiece	8960
----------------------------	------

Health care funding

Mme France Gélinas	8960
--------------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act

(Strengthening Retirement Security for Ontarians),
2016, Bill 186, Ms. Hunter / Loi de 2016 sur le
Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario
(sécuriser la retraite en Ontario), projet de loi 186,
Mme Hunter

Ms. Jennifer K. French	8961
Hon. Mitzie Hunter	8964
Mr. Jeff Yurek	8964
Mme France Gélinas	8965
Hon. Steven Del Duca	8965
Ms. Jennifer K. French	8965
Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	8966
Mr. Chris Ballard	8966
Ms. Daiene Vernile	8967
Mr. Norm Miller	8968
Mme France Gélinas	8969
Hon. Mitzie Hunter	8969
Mr. Monte McNaughton	8969

Mr. Chris Ballard.....	8969
Mr. Monte McNaughton.....	8970
Ms. Jennifer K. French	8973
Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn	8973
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	8973
Mme France Gélinas.....	8974
Mr. Monte McNaughton.....	8974
Mr. Paul Miller	8974
Mr. Yvan Baker	8978
Mr. Toby Barrett.....	8978
Ms. Catherine Fife	8978
Ms. Daiene Vernile.....	8978
Mr. Paul Miller	8979
Hon. Bill Mauro.....	8979
L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur.....	8980
Ms. Sophie Kiwala	8981
Mr. Toby Barrett.....	8982
Ms. Catherine Fife	8982
Ms. Daiene Vernile.....	8982
Mr. Norm Miller.....	8983
Ms. Sophie Kiwala	8983
Mr. Bill Walker.....	8983
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	8987
Hon. Mitzie Hunter.....	8987
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	8988
Mr. John Vanthof.....	8988
Mr. Bill Walker.....	8988
Ms. Catherine Fife	8989
Hon. Liz Sandals.....	8991
Mr. Toby Barrett.....	8992
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	8992
Mr. Shafiq Qaadri.....	8992
Ms. Catherine Fife	8993
Hon. David Zimmer.....	8993
Hon. Steven Del Duca	8994
Mr. Yvan Baker	8995
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	8996

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 2 May 2016 / Lundi 2 mai 2016

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Monte McNaughton	8939
Hon. Reza Moridi	8939
Mr. Patrick Brown	8939
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	8939
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	8939
Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	8939
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	8939
Mr. Mike Colle	8939
Mr. Bill Walker	8939
Mr. Joe Dickson	8939
Mr. Rick Nicholls	8939
Hon. Eric Hoskins	8939
Mr. Norm Miller	8939
Mr. Chris Ballard	8939
Mr. Percy Hatfield	8939
Hon. Charles Sousa	8940
Mr. Yvan Baker	8940
Mr. Michael Harris	8940
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	8940
Hon. Eric Hoskins	8940
Wearing of ribbons	
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	8940

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Hydro rates	
Mr. Patrick Brown	8940
Hon. Charles Sousa	8940
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	8941
Autism treatment	
Mr. Patrick Brown	8941
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	8941
Fundraising	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	8942
Hon. Charles Sousa	8943
Health care funding	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	8943
Hon. Charles Sousa	8943
Hon. Eric Hoskins	8944
Social Assistance Management System	
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	8944
Hon. Helena Jaczek	8944
Police oversight	
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	8945
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	8945

Ontario's credit rating

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn	8945
Hon. Charles Sousa	8945

Hydro rates

Mr. John Yakabuski	8946
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	8946

Gasoline prices

Mr. Gilles Bisson	8946
Hon. Steven Del Duca	8946
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	8947

Sexual violence and harassment

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	8947
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	8947

School closures

Mr. Bill Walker	8948
Hon. Liz Sandals	8948

Public transit

Ms. Andrea Horwath	8948
Hon. Steven Del Duca	8948

Dental care

Ms. Soo Wong	8949
Hon. Eric Hoskins	8949

Diabetes

Mr. Jeff Yurek	8950
Hon. Eric Hoskins	8950

Employment standards

Ms. Peggy Sattler	8950
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	8950

Visitor

Mr. Michael Harris	8951
--------------------------	------

Member's birthday

Ms. Ann Hoggarth	8951
------------------------	------

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	8951
-------------------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Bill Walker	8951
Ms. Peggy Sattler	8951
Mr. Arthur Potts	8951
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	8951

Continued on inside back cover



No. 167

N° 167

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 41st Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

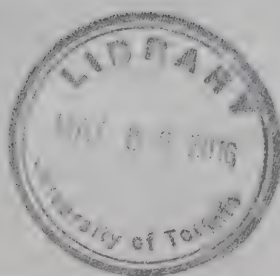
Première session, 41^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 3 May 2016

Mardi 3 mai 2016



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 416-325-3708.

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 416-325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 3 May 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 3 mai 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Orders of the day.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Government order G186.

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: I don't believe a quorum is present.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we have a quorum?

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We now have a quorum.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION

PLAN ACT (STRENGTHENING

RETIREMENT SECURITY

FOR ONTARIANS), 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE RÉGIME

DE RETRAITE DE LA PROVINCE

DE L'ONTARIO (SÉCURISER LA RETRAITE EN ONTARIO)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 2, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 186, An Act to establish the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan/ Projet de loi 186, Loi établissant le Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the opportunity to debate Bill 186. I've talked about it, obviously, for many years.

I will seek permission from my caucus colleagues as well as the members of the other caucuses to divert from the bill for a moment as I thank members in this assembly for their wonderful support over the past 48 hours, after I revealed publicly on Sunday that I had struggled with mental illness. It has been incredible to come to this work environment where, at points, we have fierce debate and don't always agree, but, over the past day and a half, members from all political parties came over,

including the Speaker, to give me a hug and tell me that they have in fact struggled with this themselves or that they have somebody in their family. I wanted to say thank you to everybody before I start the debate.

Applause.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you. It's not necessary.

Secondly, I want to point out that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Oxford.

My caucus colleagues and I have been opposed to this pension scheme almost since its inception, before details were announced and then after this piece of legislation was finally brought forward. Our recommendation is that the government not move forward with this. We are not only going to oppose this bill as we move to a vote, but when we are elected in 2018, we will also repeal it and refund the money.

That was a decision our leader, Patrick Brown, took when our party met in my city in March at our party convention to discuss policy. I think it was very popular among Progressive Conservatives, but I think it's also popular among others. I believe that even the former Premier of Ontario's son—Dalton McGuinty's son—suggested that this wasn't the right time to put forward something that could be considered a massive payroll tax in the province of Ontario.

As I've sat in this Legislature for 10 years, which I was able to mark on May 1, I've seen this government bring in extraordinary tax hikes that have burdened the people of Nepean–Carleton and have burdened people across all of this province. I refer to this: The first bill I didn't support and was able to vote against was the massive health tax that they brought onto this province. That was the largest income tax increase in Canadian history. They then brought in the single largest sales tax increase in Ontario history when they brought in the HST. They didn't make it revenue-neutral, so they were taking in roughly \$4 billion more per year than they had been previously. So the government, I think, put a burden on the people that way.

We now see the way they're bringing in their carbon pricing, or their carbon tax. It will be the single largest gas tax in Ontario's history. Again, just like the HST and just like the health tax, this is simply going into general revenue. It won't be going into environmental programs.

That brings us now to this massive payroll tax, the single largest payroll tax that Ontario will be bringing in. There will be people in this province who will think they have security from this pension, but they really won't, and it will be many years before those who are affected will have the opportunity to withdraw from it. I think it

would be advantageous if the government took a more balanced approach and considered that the ORPP not undermine any existing plans or continue to disadvantage workers and investment.

I think that if you look at this bill, there's a very real risk that Ontario workers will end up being worse off if their employers with already attractive pension plans find themselves unable to continue those plans because they are required to be part of the ORPP. That, to me, says that not only is there a risk that workers will be disadvantaged, but I also believe it's a job-killing payroll tax because we're now putting an additional burden on employers. It will hinder the ability of the private sector to do what it does best; that is, provide jobs and opportunities for people who can strengthen our economy and attract investment.

Unfortunately, we're in a position, in the province of Ontario, where this government and its job-killing policies with respect to taxation have driven well over 300,000 manufacturing jobs out of the province, and I'm starting to recognize this. The reality of all your tax hikes that have fancy names and lofty goals is that the people of Nepean–Carleton are now seeing themselves coming to my office, looking for contacts to go to the food bank. I've seen a dramatic increase in Family Responsibility Office calls because parents are finding it harder to pay their support. When that happens and a single mother is unable to pay the hydro bill and is unable to pay the cable bill and is unable to pay the soccer bill, they're coming to our office in more frequent numbers than they have in the past.

I think it's important that the government understand, when they put forward this pension investment plan, that it should be in the best interest and the highest return, free from political interference. I don't sense that that's what is happening with this ORPP. I actually feel—and I was a bit disappointed during the last federal election—that the government chose to run ads on this pension plan in order to intervene, I believe unfairly, with government money in the federal election with this pension plan. It became a strict debate between, on one hand, Premier Kathleen Wynne and, on the other, former Prime Minister Stephen Harper. I don't think it was fair to the people of Ontario to be put in the middle of that fight, and I don't think it was fair that the government used and abused tax dollars to fund those ads.

0910

When you look at their record of tax hikes, with the HST, the health tax, the carbon tax and now this job-killing payroll tax, and then you look at the waste and mismanagement, where that money is not going to its intended purposes, I think there's a real concern here that the government is not going to invest this money in the way it is intended, and that the government is not going to ensure that the money that is accepted or taken from employers and employees will actually go to those employers and employees. What I'm trying to say here is that the lack of credibility from the government opposite on financial matters has a lot of people across the prov-

ince very concerned that this will end up being another boondoggle, a scandal or another area where there will be waste and mismanagement with their precious tax dollars.

I'd be remiss not to point out that it is getting tougher in Ontario. When you look at the hydro rate increase that happened on Sunday—it's almost semi-annually that we know our hydro bills are going to go up, because the rates increase. The government likes to say, "You know what? That's just a cup of coffee." I've been here long enough to tell you, Speaker, on behalf of the people of Nepean–Carleton, that they can't afford any more cups of coffee that they're paying for but that were purchased by the government opposite. They can't afford it. They can't afford this ORPP and they don't have trust in this government that they will be able to execute it appropriately. So I stand here before you today to encourage the government to rescind this bill, to talk to employers, to talk to workers and to ensure that if they move forward with any type of pension plan that it is in the best interests of the people that I represent in Nepean and Carleton.

I'll close on this: On Sunday, I made two announcements, one that I referenced in the beginning and another at the end of my speech. I announced I would be seeking the PC nomination in Nepean for 2018's election. I live in Nepean, and my daughter goes to school in Nepean and plays hockey with the Nepean Wildcats; I'm very proud of that. I just want the folks in Carleton to know that I intend on being their MPP right up until 2018, and the people in 2018 will have me standing up against this rotten ORPP. I'll continue to defend them as best as I possibly can.

So thank you, Speaker, for the time I had, to be able to address all of those important matters.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 186, An Act to establish the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, because the people of my riding have given me a clear message to deliver to the government on this issue. They do not want a mandatory government program that takes their money away. They can't afford it, and frankly, they believe that they can do a better job of saving and providing for their retirement than the government can. They have asked the government to cancel plans for this mandatory program.

Not only have I heard this message at Tim Hortons and in phone calls and emails to my office, I've heard it through my business survey and my recent newsletter. In response to my annual business survey, 92% of the respondents said they would be negatively impacted by the mandatory pension plan, and 67% said the impact would be significant. They were clear that the cost of doing business in Ontario is the biggest challenge they face. In response to the survey, one of the businesses actually sent me a copy of a flyer they had received from an American municipality which was boasting about the low cost of doing business there and trying to convince him

to move. He told me that he receives ads like that all the time. Those American jurisdictions know that we have been trying to tell this government that Ontario companies are struggling with the high cost of doing business here and the government keeps implementing policies that drive costs even higher.

Our businesses are already dealing with spiralling costs of hydro, red tape, and high taxes. The mandatory pension plan would just make the problem worse. It will be a payroll tax, an extra cost that businesses have to pay for every single employee they hire. I've heard from businesses that this will force them to delay expansions or actually cut jobs. I received an email from a person in Ingersoll who said, "As a business operator, I certainly cannot even consider hiring staff due to this increase in payroll burden." Through Facebook, I received a message from another constituent who said, "Add to this the provincial Liberal idea of the Ontario pension plan for our staff and we are seriously looking at eliminating staff."

It shouldn't be a surprise to this government. Ministry of Finance documents actually predicted that there would be 50,000 job losses as a result of this pension—50,000, Mr. Speaker. Fifty thousand is more than the population of Woodstock, the biggest community in my riding. In fact, it would be equivalent to the entire population of Belleville or Welland. The chamber of commerce study shows that we won't get those jobs back. Municipalities are working hard to attract investment and companies into their communities, and the government does this.

The mayor of Welland told me about their innovative economic development program and how they are cutting red tape to make it easier for companies to locate there. How do we tell him that in spite of all his work, this government is pushing ahead with policies that will drive those companies away? How do we tell him the government knew that the pension plan would result in job losses but they decided to do it anyway?

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation obtained a number of ministry documents through a freedom-of-information request, including research done for the government by a polling company. According to the taxpayers federation, that polling company found that 54% of businesses are considering a hiring freeze in response to the ORPP, and two thirds of businesses would make operating cuts. Large businesses are considering cancelling existing pension plans and layoffs. Small businesses will redefine employees from full-time to contract employees.

They also found that 60% of businesses expect to be hurt by the ORPP. That means more layoffs in a province that has already been hit hard over the past three years as we've seen business after business move to more competitive jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, unemployment can be devastating to a family. All of a sudden, people are forced to spend the money they have saved for retirement or go into debt just to pay the mortgage or rent and put food on the table. People who are laid off late in life may never financially recover.

Shouldn't we be focused on ensuring that there are opportunities for people, instead of forcing through a policy that will cost 50,000 more families their source of income? The best way to ensure that you can afford your retirement is to ensure that you have a job today. Instead, the government is pushing ahead with a policy that will cost jobs and take money out of people's pockets.

We are pleased that the government has delayed the implementation by a year, because we are hoping that is the first step in delaying it permanently.

I also want to clear up some confusion for people at home. When many people hear "government pension program," they assume that the government is contributing to the cost. So let's be clear: The money for this program would be coming from employers and employees only. Each of them would be forced to contribute. This is money that employees are currently saving for retirement, or using to pay down their mortgage or, in some cases, using to try to make ends meet.

I received an email from a constituent who said, "I am sending you this email because of my concern over the new proposal of an Ontario pension plan for employees that are not contributing to a pension plan at work."

He goes on to say, "My concern is that my employer offers a dollar-for-dollar RRSP contribution up to 5% of my income. If the Ontario pension plan is implemented at my work, they will remove the RRSP plan. The result of this would be that I will be able to put less money away for retirement, and get less money toward my retirement from my employer. There are many professionals in Ontario in the same situation as me.

"My question is, does the government of Ontario plan to respect what these companies are currently doing and not implement a different plan when the employer is already doing more to help its employees to save for retirement?"

Mr. Speaker, I think that's a great question for the government today. In my last householder, I asked whether people supported a mandatory pension program and the overwhelming response was no. We have seen how this government manages their money.

One constituent said, "Please do everything possible to avoid the provincial pension. We all have CPP and don't want the extra expense of paying for a provincial pension too."

0920

Under this government, many families don't have money to spare. The cost of living is increasing rapidly, and life is already more difficult. For a person earning \$45,000 a year, this will cost them about \$800 a year. That's significant. For a person earning \$90,000 a year, the total cost to the employee and their employers will be—listen to this, Mr. Speaker—\$3,286 a year. That's a huge amount out of any family's budget. That's why our leader has committed that if we are elected in 2018, we will repeal the pension program and refund any money that has been collected.

As a constituent wrote the other day, "Prices keep going up and we as seniors are finding life hard. We have even got part-time jobs."

Seniors on fixed incomes who thought they could afford to retire are struggling to pay their spiralling hydro bills. They're seeing increasing costs for everything from driver's licences to the cost of a glass of wine. This pension program will do nothing to help these seniors who are struggling with the increased cost of living under this government. It will do nothing to help the thousands of families waiting for social housing because they can't afford a good place to live in Liberal Ontario. In fact, taking 4% off people's paycheques will mean that many of these people who are barely getting by will now need assistance.

Sometimes it seems that the government forgets where the money comes from. In this case, it comes from the families who are struggling to make ends meet and from businesses that would otherwise use it to grow and create jobs.

The Ontario PC caucus believe that those people will do much better with the money than this government ever could, and that is why we would give it back to them. The Ontario PC caucus believes that people deserve the opportunity to have a job and that our businesses deserve an opportunity to succeed. That is why we oppose this job-killing payroll tax. I think that if they didn't do this tax, it would make us all live better in this no-win Wynne Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to you. It's always good to stand on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin.

The member from Oxford and the member from Nepean-Carleton—the underlying issue that they both raised in their comments is the undermining of existing plans. That is a huge concern for not only employers but employees who are out there looking at saving their plans.

The Cadillac of pension plans that we should be looking at, now that the Liberal government has their cousin at the federal level, would be an expansion of the CPP. That would be the opportune opportunity to get something done. We have it in place. We have a mechanism that is already there. People are accustomed to it. It wouldn't mean reinventing the entire wheel. So I would encourage the government to look at doing that.

As a candidate for the NDP, back in my first election in 2011, and in 2014, I actually knocked on doors, encouraging and asking people for their support, because of an idea that we thought of—of having a pension plan, and how many individuals across this province don't have those pension plans, and how many of them are absolutely in need of a pension plan when they retire. Why? For dignity. Just the fact that they're going to be struggling with the day-to-day expenses that are occurring right now—you look at the cost of everything: prescriptions are going up, hydro is going up, groceries are going up, rent is going up. Those individuals who are struggling today are going to need those tools in place and those extra funds later on.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know where you're going to be 20 years from now, but I don't think you're going to be in that chair, and you're definitely going to need a solid pension plan that we need to push forward so that individuals can retire with dignity.

On a last note, Mr. Speaker—give me some leniency here—I just want to clear something up. I see the member from Nepean-Carleton. I am so happy that you're going to be remaining with us. I just wanted to clarify: She is not going federally; she is going to remain provincially, in Nepean. Good for the people in Nepean. She's a great candidate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, thank you very much for recognizing me to speak on this very important piece of legislation.

Let me first, at the outset, thank the Associate Minister of Finance for the incredible work she has done on this very monumental file. I cannot stress enough how important this work has been. It is not just a simple policy change. This is substantive work that is going to help generations of Ontarians with retirement income security.

I have a very difficult time, to this day, understanding why the Progressive Conservative Party will stay in some sort of dinosaur age and not acknowledge that we need to ensure that people can save enough, that we need to make sure we find opportunities for young people who work hard to have good retirement income security. For them to continue to use mislabels like “taxes”—when did saving money become a tax? When did putting money aside that could be used in the future, money that will grow and will allow people to live with dignity—not only live with dignity, but reinvest in the communities they live in—become a tax?

I think it's highly irresponsible of the official opposition to use that kind of line and also to take the position that only the few who are rich in society should have the right to save money, and the rest, who live on modest incomes and work extremely hard, should not have that opportunity. We on this side reject that notion. We think that, as a government, we have an obligation to ensure that our young people who work hard have the opportunity to save money and are able to live with dignity. That's exactly what this Ontario Retirement Pension Plan will do. I want to thank the Associate Minister of Finance for her incredible work on this file.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I want to comment on the ORPP and my colleagues' comments. The government is thinking that they are saving these people with low incomes. Let me just give you a little reality check. I come from a riding where the northern part has some of the lowest household incomes in the province of Ontario—if it's not in first place, it's in second place; it goes back and forth with Manitoulin Island as the lowest household income in the province. So I don't have a lot of wealthy people there.

Do you know what I do have a lot of? I have a lot of people who can't pay their bills. And the main reason they are now much more in poverty, if I could say that—and it's true; it's stark how much poverty has increased in my riding in the last 10 years—is that they can't pay their bills. If they have the luxury of having a job, you are actually taking 2% away from them. The employer is looking to say, "That's going to be a burden on me. Can I actually hire any more people?" So the reality on the ground is that you're not going to have as many jobs, and your own government said it's a job killer—

Hon. Michael Coteau: You guys said the same thing about the minimum wage.

Ms. Laurie Scott: No. You're not listening. You must only know people who have a lot of income, Minister of Tourism. I'm a little tired of your heckling over there.

You are then looking at increased unemployment in my area. If they have a job, they are already having a hard enough time paying their hydro bills and their food bills. They are struggling to pay either, so they either pay their hydro bill or pay their grocery bill. That's why the food banks are increased. This malarkey, baloney—whatever you want to call it—that's going on over there, that this is helping the poor people, is absolutely incorrect. Businesses, from insurance companies to mom-and-pop grocery stores to little enterprises, have told me that they're not going to be able to hire those people. So you're actually increasing poverty in the province of Ontario by doing this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock, please. I would ask the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport to come to order, please. We're continuing with questions and comments, and I have recognized the member from Windsor West. I would appreciate that we have full attention in the House.

The member from Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's always a pleasure to rise and bring the voice of my constituents from Windsor West. Don't anybody have a coronary or cardiac arrest, but I'm going to say that I do agree with the PC party in some instances. It's certainly not saying that I support their position on a proposed pension plan for low-income people; that's not what I'm agreeing with. What I'm agreeing with is the fact that the cost of living for those low-income people has increased—

Interjections.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: If the people on the Liberal side would stop heckling me and listen, maybe they would actually hear what I'm saying—

Interjections.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I always encourage healthy debate, but when it gets a little loud and a little rowdy—and especially when the Associate Minister of Health is not in her seat, realizing that heck-

ling is not allowed unless you are in your seat, I would ask that she refrain.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): But that goes for everyone in this Legislature.

I will now return to the member from Windsor West to complete her questions and comments.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker. Maybe the Associate Minister of Health will actually listen to what I'm saying before she heckles me.

What I agree with from the Conservative side is that the cost of living has gone up. It's becoming more and more difficult for low-income families—and, frankly, middle-class families—to be able to pay for their hydro, to be able to put food on the table, to be able to afford prescriptions, to be able to put gas in their vehicle, to be able to do the everyday things in life. It is getting more and more expensive.

However, what I don't agree with from the Conservative side is the fact that there shouldn't be some sort of retirement savings plan for low-income or middle-class families where people don't have the opportunity to have a job and have a pension plan as part of that job.

One of the concerns that I have, coming from a big labour and union town where many people do have retirement plans, is the fact that those in themselves are not even safe. The plans that they have through work are not safe. We've seen large companies pull up and leave Ontario—leave Canada altogether—and take the pensions of the hard-working people who have spent years working for those companies. They have now left them, when they're ready to retire, without a pension plan. That's really something that the Liberal government, federally and provincially, needs to look at: protecting those pension plans, as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Nepean–Carleton for final comments.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I would like to thank my colleague from Oxford for sharing the time with me during the debate, as well as all of those who contributed in debate.

If you ever have that moment when you say, "Gee, I wish I said that," that was when the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes spoke. I think she spoke very eloquently about the reality outside wealthy urban ridings in downtown Toronto that the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport represents.

I think that it's really important for us to have a conversation about the impact of the increased taxation that this government has brought in. I refer to my remarks on the reality of the health tax being the single largest income tax increase in Ontario's history. The HST was the single largest sales tax increase in Ontario's history. The carbon pricing scheme that they're bringing in will be the single largest gas tax increase in Ontario's history. Now we are going to see the single largest job-killing payroll tax increase in Ontario's history.

If the government wants to pretend that they're saving people's money, they only have to look at their own debt

and deficit. We have the largest subnational debt in the entire world. This isn't a government where people feel they can credibly manage their money. In fact, it's the opposite. The people of Nepean and Carleton whom I represent do not believe the Liberal government has their best interests at heart when they send their tax dollars to Queen's Park. That is what is happening here. We know it is going to impact employers. It is going to impact employees. As we have seen with this Liberal government and their inability to manage the economy, this will cause us to lose even more jobs than we have lost in the past, as we remember the 330,000 manufacturing jobs that they have driven out of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and one half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

I recognize the Associate Minister of Health.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Finance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: We wish to continue the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Well, I'm very pleased the government decided to continue debate on this bill, Bill 186, because, Speaker, this is probably one of the most important bills—all bills are important, of course, in this Legislature. But this will probably affect everyone, because at some point we're all going to need to retire—we hope, because it's not easy these days, as we've heard, to afford living in Ontario. Things are difficult; we hear that every day.

The member for Nepean–Carleton talked about manufacturing jobs leaving Ontario. That is a true fact. Our good auto manufacturing jobs are shrinking. They're shrinking, which means a lot of people are looking for second career choices. Many of those people had secure benefits, sick days, retirement, prescription plans and eye prescription plans. Those are things of the past nowadays.

I remember one of the ministers calling our job market “contemporary mobile.” Those are words that people are using now to describe the job market, to make it sound like it's more up-and-coming and vogue. Jobs are not contemporary mobile. Jobs are supposed to be something that ground us in Ontario, so we can build our lives in order to ensure that when we become seniors and we're ready to retire, we have some stability.

Speaker, can you imagine going through a lifetime of work, whether it's contract work, part-time work, or three jobs just to make ends meet, and then when you're 65—you're 65, and you've earned that 30 years of work—you don't have a stable income to rely on so that you can live in dignity. That is a scary prospect.

When I was asked to debate on this bill, I looked on the Internet. I thought, “What does retirement mean to

you?” I actually Googled that. I said, “What does retirement mean to you?” I thought, “What are people's perceptions, today especially, of what retirement means to you?”

For my parents, when they retired, I think it meant something different to that generation than for the baby boomers and the millennials who are here today. They have a different perception of what retirement is.

When I Googled that question, they showed two people in deck chairs, lying on the beach, watching the sunrise, with cold drinks on their table and, basically, the article said that they're debating what book they're going to read next. Where are they going to spend their time travelling? Where are they going to golf?

I think in a certain generation, people felt that. People thought retirement was something to look forward to, because you had that income security to rely on. You knew that when you retired, you had put money into a pension plan, and your employer contributed to that pension plan. You'd have the CPP, you'd have the OSA—

Interjection: The OAS.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: —the OAS, the Old Age Security, and you were going to be comfortable. You were going to be able to survive. You were going to have that roof over your head that you worked so hard to buy, and you were going to have that security.

Speaker, that is not the reality for people today. That is a very scary prospect for many people who are working, and for students who are going to post-secondary education and can't find work in their field but they've got this huge debt of education loans to pay off. They're worried.

Having a pension plan means you are going to have some grounding when you're older, because you don't have the opportunity to continue working a lifetime to support yourself.

When we're talking about retirement savings, we talk about planning. When you ask someone, “How are you going to plan for your retirement?”, people are at a loss because they don't have that disposable income anymore. They don't have that extra money they can put away in a nest egg. It's not—

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, they don't even have savings anymore. People are running around with huge credit card debts. They're living off their credit cards. They're borrowing money at these payday loan places.

I don't want to paint a really grim picture about how the way life is in Ontario, because we have a great province and there are opportunities. But the reality for many people—far too many people—is happening like what I'm speaking about. It's not unrealistic to think this way. I hear about this kind of thing all the time.

0940

There's a group in our society who are about age 55, and many of them have lost their jobs. I was out canvassing this weekend, and I met someone who was retired from Kellogg's. That person said that the Premier and Deb Matthews were supposed to meet with their union, and it never happened. He was really devastated to

lose his job. Right now he's in his mid- to late fifties, and that particular age group of workers is having a very, very difficult time finding new work. Some of them have gone to Second Career, and I hear back from them. They've gone to Second Career, but they're having trouble finding jobs because employers look at the age and they think, "How many years left do they have to work?" They're basically lost workers in the system. When you peak at a certain age, it's difficult to find a new job that's going to take you into those retirement years. That's a very problematic market, I think, that we need to really address.

Affordability, as I mentioned, is getting harder. We're talking about gas prices increasing, in the north especially. We heard our member from Timmins—James Bay ask that question. I believe he said it was a 26-cent difference between the north and southwestern Ontario. People in the north rely on their vehicles. They have to travel distances just to get food or visit family or for doctors' appointments, and yet they're paying so much more for gas.

The price of food has gone up. You walk into the grocery store and you pick up the necessities—some eggs, bread, butter, milk, some sliced meat and cheese for the kids for lunches, and you're spending \$40 easily. There are a lot of people who don't have that kind of disposable income to spend \$40 on the necessity of groceries, the necessities of life. More and more people are using the food bank. It's on the rise. Even people who are working don't have enough money to struggle every day to meet all those costs of living. Post-secondary students are using food banks to supplement their existence when they're going to school.

Hydro cost: That is something that has been completely out of control in this province for years. Consumers are expected to pay more and to continually pay more while this government decides to sell off Hydro One. Selling off Hydro One is not going to solve the problems of this government's deficit. When I was talking to my constituents on the weekend, we were talking about the sale of Hydro One.

Mr. Bob Delaney: That's off-topic.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, and I will get back to that topic.

People can't afford their hydro bills when there's not a proper retirement income. When we talk about retirement, Speaker, people who are retired have to pay the bills too. If hydro bills are so out of control, they're not going to be able to keep the hydro on. I just want to point out that every person they spoke to disagreed with that decision. My eyes were opened extremely wide. I hear it all the time, but listening—absolutely every person thought that this government wasn't paying attention.

New Democrats really do agree. We agree that there should be a public pension plan, and we support that concept. We support that idea. We recognize that Ontarians need the kind of fundamental change that will actually address the fundamental changes of the workplace: as I mentioned, the contemporary mobile jobs that we're talk-

ing about. That isn't the kind of job we want to fundamentally address—meet those needs. We want to make sure we have permanent, good-paying jobs with benefits and retirement packages.

That is the kind of fundamental Ontario pension plan we want to make sure supports that job market, and part of that involves ensuring that all workers in the province have a pension plan. No one should be left behind. This is what is happening right now, Speaker. In our society today, people are being left behind. There are many people in my office who come and talk to us about—constituents come to us and talk about the fact that they are working minimum wage jobs

I had a very unique—it's not a unique story, actually; it's probably a very common story. It was a very touching situation and I felt really helpless that I couldn't help this person. They are working full-time and they have a minimum wage job. They have a daughter—one child—and they got ill about two years ago. It was absolutely no fault of their own. It was an emergency surgery that had to happen. But the employer did not offer any sick days. The person had to be off two weeks to recover from surgery. Do you know what ended up happening, Speaker? The economic situation that they had to face meant that they could not pay their hydro bill. That put them behind. They couldn't afford the groceries; they had to go to the food bank.

All said and done, the employer gave them a very difficult time because they had to take those two weeks to recover, even though they had a doctor's note. They did not choose that illness. They did not choose that emergency surgery that had to happen. The result was that they had to quit their job. They had to quit their job because they ended up going into work earlier than they should have, which set them back even further. This is a true story. It set them back even further, which complicated their health, and then they ended up having to apply to OW.

Now they're still suffering the consequences of the side effects. In some ways, they might be better off in a sense because now the minimum wage job—they had to pay for daycare, they had to pay all their bills, and they were living off credit. It's a cycle that is going nowhere in Ontario, and we need to make sure that we do create jobs that are going to have some comfort and some survival built into that. We talk about those jobs, Speaker; they need to look like good-paying jobs that people can live on.

There's a campaign out there called \$15 and Fairness. Yesterday, the member from Oshawa talked about the obstacle course that she had in her parking lot at her constituency office.

Interjection: Amazing Race to the Bottom.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Amazing Race to the Bottom. It was a wonderful statement in a minute and a half. She talked about how she had to carry a backpack of necessities on her back.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: There were free weights.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Free weights, yes.

She talked about how you had to pull up your bootstraps, get a better attitude and things will get better. No. Things are going to get better when good jobs are created for Ontarians. Everybody in this province deserves to retire with dignity and to share the benefits of an Ontario public pension plan. No one, I don't think, disagrees that we all should have comfort in our retirement.

Yesterday I met with the insurance brokers, and they felt there should be an expansion of CPP. We agree with that as well. It should be a universal pension plan. CPP seems to be a successful model. It would be interesting if the government had looked at perhaps approaching the federal government about that expansion piece. That would have been perhaps a little more streamlined for people and the administration part of it as well may not have been so much in question and complicated.

I was actually thinking about the computerized part of setting up a retirement plan. I wonder if that has been thought through very thoroughly. We know that we have SAMS. They started a computer program. There was denial that there were issues. Now we've gotten to the crux of the matter, that there are issues in that situation, and they're going to have to spend another \$32 million just to fix those mistakes.

0950

That is very detailed, what kind of software or computer program they're going to use for ORPP, but I wouldn't want to see that kind of boondoggle with regard to how to manage the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, if they don't have their system properly designed. Can you imagine? Collecting the money from employers and employees could be one thing, but then when it comes time to disburse your retirement funds, what's that going to look like? That actually worries me—and that's just the bones of it, the working parts.

The whole concept of the ORPP of course we agree with. We believe that having security in retirement is beneficial for everyone. And seniors—because I am the seniors critic—are really the most exposed when there's not a retirement income that is dependable for them.

Seniors feel like they've been left behind by this government. That's what they tell me. I met with seniors when we were talking about the Ontario drug benefit plan—and I thank the government for putting a pause on it on August 1, but we are going to be watching that very closely. That was an increase of \$70 a year on their deductible. Seniors don't have the option of making more money to pay for increased drug benefits, so I was glad to see the government put a pause on it. They said they're going to keep doing some consultations, but it still isn't reassuring us that that increase won't come.

When we talk about retirement, the seniors who are in retirement right now are having trouble affording life—all the things that I talked about earlier. To throw another \$70 onto their prescription drugs, which they have no choice but to buy for their health, doesn't make a lot of sense. It will just end up costing the system, because people had said, "I'll ration my drugs," which means their health won't be in top form, which means they'll end up at the doctor's more or in the emergency room.

Mr. Bob Delaney: You're drifting.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I know the member wants me to stay on topic, and I will, because the retirement plan is really important to seniors.

I don't know if I'll be able to see the benefits of the ORPP at my age. I'll be contributing, of course. I'm pretty mature up there. Is it 2020? What year is it that people will start using it? If I'm 50—

Interjections.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I have a minute and a half. Whoever is going to answer in questions and comments, if you're around 52 years old, and you're going to have the ORPP start in 2018, it would be interesting to know if that would benefit the generation that's contributing right now. I know the young people will benefit, and that's really important, but it would be interesting to find out how that would look in my retirement. It would be interesting to know.

I met a woman recently in my constituency office. She came to me. She was 70 years old and still working. She said, "I don't know what I would do if I didn't supplement my income." She has CPP, Old Age Security and guaranteed income. She says, "I have a two-bedroom apartment and a car. I'm finding it hard to survive." She's 70 years old and still working? I think we all deserve some retirement when we get to our golden years, and to actually retire in dignity.

I'm glad I was able to contribute to this debate. Retirement is extremely important; retirement savings security is very important to the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I always enjoy responding to the comments of my colleague from London-Fanshawe. She made some points that seemed to walk a parallel course to the proposal for the ORPP, but let's go to the real point here: If you are in your twenties or if you're in your thirties, you have to look at yourself and say, "Is my employer making any plans for me? Am I, in the type of work I'm doing, making any plans whatsoever to be able to retire?" Disturbingly, the answer to that question is no. Then you have to look at: "What is the Canada Pension Plan going to be able to contribute for me when I'm likely to retire?" The reality is that if you're an Ontario worker, the chances are that the Canada Pension Plan will contribute less than \$10,000 a year for you, and Old Age Security won't contribute a great deal more than that.

If you're in the first third of your working life, you would have to look in the mirror and say, "Is it my desire to retire in poverty?" If the answer is no, then you're going to ask, "What are my alternatives here?" At the moment, the only alternative on the table here is the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

I've listened to some people say, "Well, why don't you just contribute to your RRSP?" Well, if that were the case, why are more than two thirds of Canadians not contributing to their RRSP? That's one of the real issues:

that the RRSP and other savings vehicles are really repositories for those who are very wealthy.

This is a level playing field, and this means that, large or small, every organization and every employee will contribute throughout their working career to a retirement that will give them a better chance of living in dignity and comfort.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much for the questions and comments.

The member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I guess I was going to take a different tract of thought, but hearing the member from Mississauga–Streetsville—it's interesting that the government members talk about not having an employer look after your retirement, but they fail to mention our own ownership of our savings and the opportunity for individuals to save.

This government consistently, and without fail, chooses to legislate before they choose to educate. I think that's just a fundamental problem with this government. They block out everything else that they've done.

I want to thank the member when, in her speech, she talked about hydro rates. We've all just had a constituency week where we've been back in our ridings. I spent a considerable amount of time in my office. Consistently, people are coming to my office, still to this day, and they will continue to do so until this government changes—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: Minister, you can take your two minutes as well.

Interjection: Wow, you're arrogant—

Mr. Steve Clark: Yes, they are pretty arrogant over there.

Again, the hydro rates system in this province is out of control. This government is making no effort at all to make a change.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

Mr. Steve Clark: They can heckle all they want. But yet, when you get a group here yesterday like the insurance bureau—all the insurance brokers were here. They are dead set against this plan, yet government members were down there in droves at their reception, having their hors d'oeuvres and cocktails. Yet they ignore—

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: Well, again, Speaker, they can heckle all they want. But they talk out of both sides of their mouth. They say one thing and then they do something completely different. I think people will judge them for that, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It's an excitable room here this morning, as it should be when we're in this House, discussing pensions and retirement security.

I am pleased to be able to weigh in on my colleague's 20-minute remarks this morning, the member from London–Fanshawe, who is also the critic for seniors. She

made some excellent points and reminded us—in the words of the member from Mississauga–Streetsville—about walking a parallel course, because if we don't see how things work together and how they run in parallel, then we're not seeing what's happening.

The realities in our province are that things are interconnected. To her point, those who are on the verge of retiring and want to retire but can't financially afford to retire and who have to keep working until age 70 or later, and they don't know how on earth they're going to pay for things, to afford living and the cost of living—we have to talk about those things.

1000

For it to be hollered at us that it's off topic is so strange to me, because seniors' issues and retirement issues are a complicated basket of topics. Anyone who is in retirement still has bills to pay and hopefully will be able to afford to keep the lights on or keep the heat on. Those costs are not going down, despite what the government tells us.

When we talk about dignity, I would love to hear the government tell us what dignity means to them. I don't think dignity just means comfort or extra spending money, or even money to go and pay for a movie or whatever. I think it's peace of mind. Peace of mind for someone in their retirement is what we should be aiming for. So maybe to stop selling off Hydro would be a good start, to help us actually have money in our economy so that people can afford to live and retire with peace of mind and dignity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 186. I want to thank the members from London–Fanshawe, Leeds–Grenville and Oshawa for their comments.

I found it really curious that the member for London–Fanshawe—well, first she painted a picture of Ontario that told me we need the ORPP. She made our case with all of her examples. Indeed, people need income security when they retire, and she made our case that we need the ORPP. Then she went on to criticize it, after making the case for the need for an ORPP, and suggested there are better ways to do it. But finally, she turned around and complained that she's not going to benefit from the ORPP.

I'm a little confused as to her position. First she created and painted a picture that suggested the province of Ontario needs to address the issue of income security in our retirement years, then she criticized it, but then she turned around and said, "Guess what? I'm not going to get it."

I think the NDP on that side really needs to make up their mind on where they actually stand on this issue. If you don't like it, don't complain that you're not going to get it. That's the first principle, I think, Mr. Speaker, that we can all agree on. If you don't like it, then don't stand there and complain, "I'm not going to get it. This other person's not going to get it."

All that suggests is that deep down they really do want the ORPP. They really would love to be able to be part of the ORPP. I believe that is, as they say—what is it? The proof is in the pudding. Just the fact that you complain you're not going to be able to benefit from the ORPP tells me you think there's value in the ORPP. So why don't you just come out and support it, and be consistent?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please. Back to the member from London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you to the member from Leeds—Grenville, the member from Oshawa and especially the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Wow. I was really flattered that she was listening so intently to my debate contribution. I congratulate you for really paying attention and giving me your feedback.

Because this is what debate is all about, right? Healthy debate is about exchanging your ideas. It's not about offending other people. I have an opinion, you have an opinion, and yet we're here together to discuss those differences of opinion and try to make things better. So I really appreciate it, and I'm extremely flattered that she was actually paying attention so intently to what I was saying. Thank you for that and thank you for her feedback.

I do want to say that New Democrats, of course, support a universal pension plan. We believe it strongly and we always have felt this way. It's nothing new for us that when you become a senior, when you're ready to retire, you need to make sure you can have your roof over your head, a comfortable roof over your head. You need to make sure you can buy food, transportation, medical costs—the basic necessities of survival. Yes, absolutely, we need to make sure we look at this bill very intently.

I have to compliment our pension critic in our caucus, from Oshawa. She is doing a fabulous job of watching this government. She has her hawk eye on this legislation, and she is going to make sure that they pay attention and that we give our debate and feedback on their ideas.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts today, Speaker, on this very important legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate this morning on Bill 186, the pension plan, the ORPP.

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: Stay, Dipika, stay.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yeah, please stay around. You'll enjoy this.

The Associate Minister of Health spoke about painting pictures. The thing that I remember during the federal election campaign is the picture that this government was trying to paint about this ORPP, with this guy running down the dock or whatever and jumping, and then the bridges coming together so that he could actually jump

over the ravine. Somehow he was able to do this because of the ORPP.

If you want to talk about pictures, this is exactly the political picture this government is trying to paint with this ORPP. And I know who their audience is. I'm not their audience. The member for Oxford is not their audience. We're a little too old to be their audience. But they're trying to paint the picture—maybe you pages are a little too young, but not too much older than you: This is who they're trying to paint this picture for. Maybe my friend Lucas, underneath the underpress there: Maybe they're trying to paint the picture to him—their own staff—that somehow with this ORPP, your retirement is going to be like you've just crossed the border into Shangri-La and everything is just going to be fine because the Liberals have saved your retirement with this ORPP.

But that's exactly what it is. It's a pretty, painted picture, but it is out of touch with reality. They are giving the impression that somehow everything else in your life is okay; that it is not going to be an issue for you to have 2% of your wages tucked away, and your employer, 1.9%—of course, the Associate Minister of Finance is probably going to correct me on the 1.9%, and 1.9% from the employer—that somehow this is not going to have any effect on you. Well, that's another one of their pretty pictures they want to paint, because they want to give you the impression that everything will be fine once this bill is enacted into legislation.

The business community sees it differently. We met with folks from the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario yesterday. They're very concerned about the impact that this bill is going to have on the operations of their business. The reality is, it's going to affect their staffing. So that pretty picture of that 1.9% coming off your cheque and the 1.9% coming off your employer's cheque: Is it as pretty a picture if you don't have a job anymore? Whether it's 1.9%, 2.9%, 99.9%, it doesn't matter. You don't have a job? There's no deduction, because you haven't got an income from employment.

They don't want to talk about that. The Fraser Institute, the C.D. Howe Institute and others have cautioned about the impact that this is going to have on employment in this province—the ORPP. We don't hear about that. The Liberals only paint the picture they want you to see. But those same young people that they're aiming that pretty picture at are the ones who are coming into my office and saying, "John, we can't make it. We can't put any money into an RRSP"—let me just backtrack a little bit.

Years ago, the government, in its wisdom, brought out RRSPs, registered retirement savings plans. Now they're just retirement savings or registered savings plans. They brought them out because they recognized that the Canada Pension Plan alone and Old Age Security alone may not be enough for people in their retirement. But they gave the opportunity and the impetus and made it attractive from a tax-deducted point of view for allowing people to put money away.

My youngest son is going to be 25 in July. I told him, "Lucas, out of every paycheque"—

Interjection.

1010

Mr. John Yakabuski: Not my Lucas in the underpress; I have a Lucas of my own, too.

I said, "Lucas, every time you get a paycheque, make sure you pay yourself first. Put some money away so you're planning for that day when you're no longer working. Don't depend on Mitzie Hunter. Don't depend on Michael Coteau. You let Lucas Yakabuski take care of himself." He said, "You're right. I am putting money away from my paycheques because we don't know what the world is going to be like in 40 years." He's 25, so he doesn't know what the world is going to be like in 40 years, but I know what it's like today—and hopefully, we'll get rid of the Liberal government and things will start to get better.

I know what it's like for young people today when they're coming into my office and saying, "We haven't got any money to put into an RRSP. We haven't got any money to put into a tax-free savings account. We can barely get by. We'd like to be able to buy a home. We'd like to be able to put money towards a mortgage, a home"—the biggest asset that most people ever own. Maybe not for some of the rich people on the other side of the House, but for most people the home they live in is the asset with the greatest value that they're ever going to have in their entire lives. We're going to make it harder for people to get that home because more and more of their paycheque is going to be going into a Liberal pension scheme. More of their paycheque is going to go into a Liberal pension scheme, and less of that paycheque is going to go to establish themselves to be financially secure when they get older—because they've been able to buy a home and over the years pay off that home so that they have a tangible, valuable asset as part of their retirement portfolio.

The other thing they say is, "John, the hydro bills: We're going to put 1.9% into a pension plan, but every time I turn around, it's 5%, 6%, 8%, 10% more on the hydro bill. How are we supposed to get by on a day-to-day basis, let alone have a further deduction from our paycheque to go into a Liberal pension scheme?" This is the reality in Ontario that this government is failing to recognize. It seems that they just go along and design these schemes, and they think they're going to make the world just wonderful, but they don't take into consideration the pain and harm they're inflicting on people with their current policies.

I mentioned this yesterday in question period, Speaker: I spoke to a lady on Sunday at a 50th anniversary, and she's a volunteer at the Eganville food bank. She said, "John, can I see you for a second? I don't know what you can do about this, but it is hurting people badly." Usage at the food bank in Eganville was up 30%. They ran out of food; they ran out of things to give to people. They rely on donations and fundraising. They ran out because of the increase in clientele. Almost exclusively, when

those people were asked what is bringing them to the food bank—"We're at our wit's end because of the continuous increases in hydro." The cost of electricity is putting them into poverty, as my colleague from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock said. Hydro is putting people into poverty. It's forcing them to go to the food bank.

You have to ask yourself—anybody can ask themselves—how would you feel if you had to turn to a food bank? You question your own capabilities, your pride. Everything is damaged because you're forced to go to a food bank. Why are they going to a food bank? Because of the hydroelectricity policies of this government.

Now we're taking all of that—a 418% increase in the cost of electricity since this government took office in 2003. If you look at the peak price, 18 cents a kilowatt hour—418%. Those young people—is there anything on the income side they can speak to that has gone up 418%? Only if you win the lottery. You've got a better chance of winning the lottery than having income security based on anything done by this government. I guarantee you that whatever money they think they're going to put away in the pension plan, you're going to be losing it tenfold in the increases in fees and taxes.

What about driver's licences? The driver's licences, the licence of a car, it's all gone up exponentially by this government. Every time you turn around, they're putting their hands into your pockets and hurting you more. Now they're saying, "We just need you to put a little more into a pension plan." They don't have the money. You're crippling them and putting them into poverty. Stop helping. You're putting them in the poorhouse.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Since it is 10:15, this House will stand recessed until 10:30.

The member will have an opportunity for questions and comments when debate resumes on this particular bill.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This morning, just before we do introductions, just to let you know, it looks like there are some guests whom we want to introduce on behalf of whomever. Let's get through them as quickly as possible, as we do have a tribute to be done today before question period.

It's now time for introduction of guests.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Michael Coteau: Joining us in the east members' gallery today are two interns from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, Ben Elliott and Yasim Mahamed. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Han Dong: It's my pleasure to introduce and welcome my good friends and members of the board of the Canada Shanghai Business Association: Mr. Ying Yao, the president; Mr. Ming Zhu; Ms. Yue Fang; and Ms. Li Fang.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to welcome Special Olympian Madison Borges and her mother, Maria, to Queen's Park today from Uxbridge. Welcome.

Mr. Patrick Brown: I would like to introduce the family of page Grace Fletcher from the great riding of Simcoe North: her mom, Leanne Fletcher; her dad, Mark Fletcher; and her sister, Kate Fletcher. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: It's my privilege to introduce the family, first of all, of our page captain, Samuel Simeon Suresh. They are in the gallery up there: mother, Dorothy; father, Suresh Babu Srinivasan; and sister Sharon Suresh. I say to them, vanakkam.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'd like to introduce our summer intern for the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, Daniel Scarpitti. Daniel, welcome, wherever you are. Let's welcome Daniel.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure to welcome our page Marthangi Vicknarajah from Scarborough-Guildwood, and her parents, who are here today: Vicknarajah Shanmugaratnam and Kamalasini Vicknarajah. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to introduce a Special Olympic athlete from North Bay, Jackelyn Osborne, and her mother, Kathy Osborne.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm delighted that page Spencer Couch from Beaches-East York—his grandmother is in the east public gallery, Wendy Williamson.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm very honoured to be able to introduce to the House today James Rice from Tiverton. He was one of Huron-Bruce's Remarkable Citizens this past year.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I understand that we have, in the east gallery today, my friend and former colleague who toiled for a number of years in this place for my predecessor, Greg Sorbara. Sharon Laredo is with us here today.

Hon. David Oraziatti: It's a privilege to introduce, in the members' east gallery, Jennifer Shiller, my policy adviser, who's here with her aunt, Helen Shiller, who served 24 years as a city councillor in Chicago. Please welcome.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I am very pleased that our page captain from Guelph, William Deaton, has his father, Damien Walsh, and his uncle Terry Storr visiting today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: On behalf of the member from Wellington-Halton Hills, I want to introduce the mother of page Samantha McPherson. Her mother is here today—and so is the member from Wellington-Halton Hills, so I'll give it to him.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have patience, and if the member would like to do a personal introduction, I will recognize the member for Wellington-Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'd like to welcome Shannon McPherson, the mother of Samantha McPherson, who is, of course, a page here in the Legislature.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I'm very proud, actually, to welcome in the House the two interns who will be spending the summer with us in our Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure: Mr. Matthew Smith, a fourth-year student at Queen's University, and Rachel Venturo, a second-year law student from the University of Ottawa. Welcome to our Legislature.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir de vous présenter M. Daniel Marchand ainsi que son père et sa mère, Armand et Lise Marchand. Daniel est un athlète paralympique qui est venu me visiter aujourd'hui. Je leur souhaite la bienvenue.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to recognize in the gallery this morning page Aadil Rehan and his mom, Nazish Rehan, who are here with us today.

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to welcome Monica Granados, who is the daughter of the chief government whip, and who is here at the Legislature. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'd like to give a warm welcome to my interns who will be with us this summer. They just began yesterday and I wish them all the very best for an exciting and productive internship. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Julia McArthur, Eduardo Rodriguez and Marie Visca.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery five interns from Quebec as part of the Fondation Jean-Charles-Bonenfant internship program. Please join me in welcoming them as they spend the next few days exploring the Legislature. Levez-vous, s'il vous plaît.

I'm also honoured to announce that Special Olympics Ontario is visiting with us today at Queen's Park. I have the humble glory of being on the board for Special Olympics Ontario. In the Speaker's gallery are 16 athletes and their families, along with board members and staff.

For my part, my commercial—I normally don't like you to do it, but I'm going to do it—please join us tonight for a reception in the gathering place, rooms 228 and 230, to celebrate these very special athletes. Thank you for being with us.

1040

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would now like to introduce you to our new pages, if they could assemble, please.

Serving in the first session of the 41st Parliament: from London-Fanshawe, Aadil Rehan; from Richmond Hill, Alfred Shi; from Mississauga-Erindale, Ayana Siddiqui; from Ottawa Centre, Benjamin Falkner; from St. Paul's, Brendan Weeks; from Don Valley West, Claire Atkins; from Chatham-Kent-Essex, Emma Vandermeer; from Nepean-Carleton, Faiz Jan; from Simcoe North, Grace Fletcher; from Ajax-Pickering, Isabela Rittinger; from York South-Weston, Julia Lalonde; from Vaughan, Julia Melino; from Hamilton Mountain, Laura Persichini;

from Newmarket–Aurora, Leah Walsh; from Scarborough–Guildwood, Marthangi Vicknarajah; from London West, Preston Swan-Merrison; from Wellington–Halton Hills, Samantha McPherson; from Etobicoke North, Samuel Simeon Suresh; from Lakeshore–East York, Spencer Couch; from Guelph, William Deaton.

These are our pages.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finally, in the Speaker's gallery today, would the members please join me in welcoming the family of the late Joan M. Fawcett, MPP for Northumberland during the 34th and 35th Parliaments, who are seated in the Speaker's gallery: her sons Tim and Andy; his wife, Ruth; daughter, Kristen Dajia, and her husband, Peter; granddaughters Allie, Cariston and Genny Fawcett and Katerina; and good friend Tass Corbier. Welcome.

Also in the Speaker's gallery is Mr. David Warner, MPP for Scarborough–Ellesmere during the 30th, 31st, 33rd and 35th Parliaments and also former Speaker; Steve Gilchrist, the president of the former parliamentarians and MPP for Scarborough East during the 36th and 37th Parliaments; and Mr. David Neumann, MPP for Brantford during the 34th Parliament. Welcome to all of you.

Also, hiding somewhere in the House, as most staff do, are the former staff of Joan Fawcett. We welcome them as well. Please stand if you're hiding in the wings somewhere, former staff members. There they are. As I can attest to all members, the staff are deeply appreciated by all the members, and it's very nice of you to be here for the tribute.

JOAN FAWCETT

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader on a point of order.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Joan Fawcett, former member for Northumberland, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader is seeking unanimous consent to pay tribute. Do we agree? Agreed.

Mr. Todd Smith: Good morning to the family and friends of Joan Fawcett and to the former staff members as well. I would just like to thank Mr. Warner and Mr. Gilchrist for the great job that they do. They're here often with the families, making this a special and memorable moment for the families of our former members.

It's an honour to rise today and pay tribute to the life of Joan M. Fawcett, who represented the riding and the people of Northumberland in this place from 1987 until 1995. Joan was born in Kingston. She went to Ottawa Teachers' College and Queen's University before serving her community as a teacher.

Before becoming a teacher, though—and we've heard this a few times from former members of this House—Joan considered a higher calling. She considered becoming a nun. According to her son Tim, she considered Mother Teresa to be her idol—not a bad person to choose if you want a mentor.

Joan met her husband and the love of her life, Bob, when she was teaching. He was the principal at the school. She and her family had deep ties to the Kingston community, but she ultimately settled on Northumberland as the place to make her home because it was a midway point between where she was from in Kingston, and Collingwood, where her husband, Bob, was from. Joan would go on to teach at Colborne Public School, home of the Big Apple—everybody sees it on the side of the 401 in eastern Ontario—while Bob taught in Cobourg at Cobourg District Collegiate Institute West.

When asked what they most remembered about Joan and Bob, one of their friends fondly stated that no one could jive like these two when they got on a dance floor. As we know, in this game of politics, having fast feet can come in handy at times.

Joan first entered politics on council for the village of Colborne, and she was the reeve of the village when she was elected MPP back in 1987. She first tried to win the seat in 1985 against Howard Sheppard, whom we honoured in this place just before Christmas last year. In a tribute to her positivity and her sense of fair play, Joan's campaign against Howard wasn't negative. As a matter of fact, she would tell people, "I don't deny that Mr. Sheppard has been a good representative; I just think I can be a better one."

That positivity and fairness was something that she lived year after year in Colborne. Every summer, she committed to sending six or eight kids to camp out of her own pocket. She would regularly help students who needed things that their families might not be able to afford. She was a great constituency MPP.

Both elections between the two in 1985 and 1987 were hard fought, with Joan winning the second one and joining David Peterson's government in 1987 here at Queen's Park. While here, she served as a deputy whip, she was chair of the Liberal rural caucus, and she was also assistant to the Minister of Skills Development at the time.

While she was here, Joan championed a number of bills, but particularly was a supporting member of a bill put forward by our caucus member today, Ted Arnott, the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, that would allow volunteer firefighters to use flashing green lights on their personal vehicles when responding to a fire call. She had her own legislation passed as well regarding a special permit on the licences of our volunteer firefighters. Both members were working on that very important call, which is very important today in rural Ontario. As a matter of fact, it's an issue that we're still tackling here in the Legislature. Just a few weeks ago, the Minister of Transportation and I had a conversation about signs being put up on some of our rural highways leading to

the 401. Folks in the Toronto area still don't necessarily know what those green flashing lights are for. It's because of the work of Joan Fawcett and our colleague Ted Arnott that there is a little bit more awareness of that issue today.

After Premier Peterson was defeated in 1990, Joan was considered a possible successor at the time. But realizing the long hours that would be involved and the time it would take away from her beautiful family, who join us today, whom she loved more than anything, she decided not to join that race.

Even after her final election in 1995, Joan stayed active in her community, including as the chair of the local United Way, which brought her back to where her political career started, before council, this time in Cramahe township in 1996.

After retiring, Joan and Bob moved to a property that Joan had inherited on Howe Island in the Kingston area. Bob had previously made that land a Christmas tree farm—which I know would be near and dear to Jim Wilson's heart; he has the Christmas tree bill, of course—in order to fund the education of his kids. That was the purpose of the Christmas tree farm: to educate his kids Tim, Andrew and Kristen, who join us here today.

You know, there's an old saying that we all know that goes, "Sometimes, it takes a village to raise a child." But in an interview that he gave to Northumberland Today, her son Tim said, "Sometimes it takes a person to raise a village's children." That was something his mother certainly tried to do every day that she served the people of Northumberland.

Today we honour someone who for eight years graced these halls here at Queen's Park, but who for her entire life was the soul of generosity and a very, very special lady in Northumberland county. We thank her for her service.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tribute?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: On behalf of the Ontario NDP caucus, I would like to welcome the family, friends, colleagues and former staff of Joan Fawcett to the Legislature today.

In the Bible, there's a verse that reads: "I will show you my faith by my deeds." There's something to be said about that line. The way we live, the way we serve should be able to provide a certain degree of insight into who we are, what we stand for and what we hold dear. It should tell you about what's important to us and what we are willing to sacrifice for. No matter where you fall on the church-versus-state debate, it's hard not to notice some of the similarities that draw people to commit their lives to service in either.

1050

At their finest, both institutions appeal to the best in us, tapping into a desire to leave the world a little better than when we found it. While both have shaped powerful movements that have changed the course of human history, it is the very real and tangible opportunity to positively impact the lives of those closest to us that

gives each institution the strength to wield considerable influence.

It's clear that the intersection of Joan Fawcett's faith and political beliefs motivated her towards a life of elected service. I never had the privilege of meeting Joan, but in preparing for this morning, it became very clear that she was equally motivated by two key principles: "Love your neighbour as yourself," and "All politics is local."

Regardless of your system of belief or your political affiliation, that's not bad advice for anyone with the goal of a career in public service. It's clear that Joan was a woman who spoke volumes, often without saying a word. While she didn't strike me as a firebrand, it's obvious that she was no shrinking violet either. This wasn't because she was shy or reluctant to speak up, but because she knew that what you did and how you did it was the most effective way to demonstrate your convictions. She understood that words were important, but meant little if you didn't put in the effort to back them up. To her, politics wasn't just a profession. She viewed it as a calling, something she was born to do.

Today we often talk about the dearth of female representatives in public life. At the time Joan was at Queen's Park, it would have been an even greater disparity, particularly as she balanced responsibilities of motherhood and family alongside her career as an MPP, with only 20 women of 130 members here in this chamber. That's just 15% of the seats in this House. While history may not remember women like Joan Fawcett in the same way that it will the Rae Luckocks or Agnes Macphails of the world, it's important to acknowledge that those of us who follow stand on the shoulders of brave women like Joan: those whose efforts call on us to do the same for the next generation of women who take up the challenge of public life, who seek to do the important work that Joan did.

Today, we have the privilege of welcoming Joan's family and friends to Queen's Park. While there may only be one name on the ballot, all of us are familiar with the sacrifices that our loved ones make so that we can do what we do. While MPPs want their constituents and neighbours to remember them as effective representatives, there's something extra-special when your loved ones acknowledge your time in office as time well spent. To all of you, thank you for sharing Joan with the people of Northumberland and the province of Ontario. On behalf of Andrea Horwath and Ontario's New Democrats, we thank Joan for her exemplary service and commitment to the community she diligently served.

May you rest in peace, Joan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tribute?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Before I begin my remarks, I must report that somebody stole my notes, my good friend from Prince Edward-Hastings. I'm sure he took all my notes, Speaker. And I thank him for that.

It's bittersweet that I have the opportunity to pay tribute to a former colleague and a friend, Joan Fawcett. Andy, Tim and Kristen, welcome to Queen's Park. Thank you, your family and your friends for being here today.

Thank you for sharing your mom not only with the people of Northumberland, but indeed the whole province of Ontario. For the birthdays and special events that she may have missed, like some of us do around here from time to time, just know that she never took her family for granted. As many of the members here today that worked with her will tell you, she was doing work to provide a better Ontario that we all enjoy today.

I know first-hand how difficult it is to try to balance public and private life, especially with a young family. Joan began her career as an educator, as you heard, in the early 1970s. She taught at Colborne Public School. She taught there for quite a number of years. Joan's husband Bob was also a teacher, at the Cobourg West high school.

The availability of a strong, provincially funded education system for all youth was important to Joan and her family. Around 1983 saw the beginning of Joan's political career as she sat on council in the village of Colborne. As you have heard, to put it in perspective, that's the home of the Big Apple.

I had the pleasure of first meeting Joan while serving on the Brighton township council. We were municipal neighbours. Joan was, without a doubt, one of the sweetest, most caring people I've ever had the pleasure of knowing. A devoted and loving mother, wife and grandmother were her most valuable titles in life.

In the words of one of her most admired heroes, Mother Teresa, "We shall never know all the good that a simple smile can do." "Spread love everywhere you go. Let no one ever come to you without leaving happier."

As a politician, I think we all have the best intentions to fulfill this with the constituents we meet and serve. However hard we try, we all know this isn't always the case. Joan strived to model her life, as you heard, after Mother Teresa: always loving, always giving, and deeply caring for everyone she met.

In 1985, Joan made a go at the provincial seat for Northumberland, but wasn't successful against the incumbent, Howard Sheppard. As you know, we had a tribute to him just a few months back. Shep, as he was known in the community, was well regarded in the riding, and people would often tell Joan that to go against him, she was going to have a tough time. But as you heard, she always retorted that while he was a good representative, she could be much better.

Joan was not happy with the then PC government's treatment of municipalities in the education system. Always relentless in her endeavours, Joan took another shot at provincial politics and, in 1987, successfully ended the more-than-43-year Conservative reign in the riding of Northumberland.

While in government, Joan served as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Skills Development, and as deputy government whip and chair of the rural caucus. During the brief term of the NDP government, Joan served in the official opposition as critic for seniors, disabilities and women's issues. She also served as the Liberal caucus chair and as co-critic for agriculture and food.

She was a member of many legislative committees, including the standing committees on public accounts,

social development, resources development, and regulations and private bills. She was also appointed to the Select Committee on Constitutional Reform.

A strong advocate for social justice and equality, Joan saw the need for and successfully lobbied the federal government at that time to support and grow the social housing programs in Northumberland county.

Always a believer for volunteering within the community, Joan served with the United Way, the Catholic Women's League and the Sweet Adelines.

Joan was very aware of the importance of volunteers and how valuable a resource they are, especially in rural Ontario. She was also a strong advocate of volunteer firefighters. During Joan's term on municipal council in the village of Colborne, she was appointed as council liaison to the fire department. In that capacity, she learned just how valuable this group of volunteers was and still is in its respective communities.

Understanding the vital role they hold within rural communities, Joan introduced a private member's bill in 1993 that would amend the Highway Traffic Act to provide a decal on the licence plates of volunteer firefighters, to make their vehicles identifiable while performing their emergency duties. This received unanimous support from all three parties and was passed by the Legislature.

Discussion from this debate also sparked interest in using the flashing green light for volunteer firefighters responding to an emergency call.

After her defeat in 1995, Joan decided to enjoy life and retire with her husband, Bob, in the Thousand Islands area, and spend their winters in Florida.

It is Joan's campaign team that I have to thank for being here today. Some of them, as you heard, join us here today in the members' gallery and are part of my team right now that helped me: Darlene Warner, who works for my Brighton office; Diana Flesch, and Jim and Adria Williams. Without their hard work on behalf of Joan, which trained them really well, and approaching me to carry on her legacy in 2003, it's entirely likely that I wouldn't be here today, so thank you.

1100

My last opportunity to chat with Joan was about two months before she passed. We ran into each other at a year-end ceremony at Cobourg west collegiate high school. We had discussed getting together to catch up soon—she had just moved back into the area—but busyness got the best of both of us, and then it was too late.

Speaker, Joan Fawcett's years of hard work in this Legislature provided a better Ontario for all of us today.

I'd like to close by thanking Joan for her service and commitment to her community. She remains an inspiration, mentor and friend to me and to the rest of Northumberland.

To her family, thank you for sharing your mom with us.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their heartfelt and kind comments about Joan.

To the family, as we have a tradition, you will receive a copy of Hansard and a DVD of today's tributes. Again, as you can hear, we hold her in high esteem here, as a former member. We also would like to thank the family for the gift of Joan. Thank you very much.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. The energy minister said yesterday that the \$12.8-billion nuclear refurbishment over the next 30 years will produce clean energy. But last week, your environment minister said nuclear energy will be gone from Ontario in 10 years.

Premier, which minister is right and which minister is wrong, and which one will you be supporting at the cabinet table?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure from what document the Leader of the Opposition is quoting, but we have a long-term energy plan—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will jump right into warnings if you'd like. Do you want to take a straw poll? Okay. So it stops.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Nuclear power is part of that long-term energy plan. It's very clearly laid out in that plan, and I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to take a look at the LTEP.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier: What I suggest the Premier take a look at is her environment minister's speech at the Economic Club, where he said that nuclear energy will be gone in Ontario in 10 years.

Only one of your ministers can be correct. One minister wants nuclear power gone. The other minister wants nuclear power to be the backbone of Ontario. The Premier either supports the nuclear industry or she doesn't. So will the Premier please tell us, who is her energy minister? And will the person setting energy policy please stand up?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're inching closer—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister, you're not helping.

You're inching closer, and I'm going to remind all members again: You use only titles or ridings. I'm going to start being strict on that, even with the heckling.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Nuclear power is part of our long-term energy plan. It will remain a part of our long-term energy plan. There is a refurbishment at Bruce Power that will be undertaken. We are refurbishing Darlington and extending the life of Pickering. We have one minister who is responsible for all of that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's nice that you do get quiet when I stand, but as soon as I sit down, you start up again. I'll finish it.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we have said that we're not going to build energy we don't need. The PCs would spend \$15 billion on new nuclear; we are not going to do that.

The other reality is that we have a minister who's responsible for a climate change plan which is not supported by the members opposite, because they apparently do not believe that we need to have initiatives in place to fight climate change, even though it is the single most urgent threat—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question again is to the Premier. The Premier enjoys muddying the waters. The reality is, you have one minister saying that the nuclear industry should be gone. You have another minister saying that it should be supported. Do you even know what your own cabinet is saying? Is this government that disorganized?

The reality is that Ontario's nuclear industry is one of the few industries that has concrete job security—well, until now. The industry creates the cheapest emission-free power we have and produces 60% of the province's energy. Just as importantly, it supports 50,000 jobs. Think about that: 50,000 jobs. That's the same as the population of Welland, Aurora or North Bay.

The Premier must commit to supporting Ontario's nuclear industry. Furthermore, the Premier should ensure that the environment minister apologizes to the 50,000 people working in these nuclear jobs.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are very proud that our nuclear power is 90% emissions-free, Mr. Speaker. We are investing in refurbishment of our nuclear generation. We have got nuclear power as the backbone of our long-term energy plan, as our baseload in this province. The Leader of the Opposition knows that, Mr. Speaker. For—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, the member from Leeds–Grenville and the deputy House leader, come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I can only imagine that the Leader of the Opposition does not want to talk about the realities of climate change in this province, does not want to talk about the reality that there must be urgent action in order to deal with this threat of climate change.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the member from Renfrew.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: He does not want to talk about that, so he's going on some wild goose chase. He knows perfectly well we're investing in nuclear. He knows it's part of our long-term energy plan. But we have to tackle climate change. That is imperative for the survival of the planet.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, since the Liberal cabinet is perplexed on their energy policy, let's try something else.

To the Premier: I want to tell you about five-year-old Joshua from Oakville. At age three he was diagnosed with autism. As treatment, Joshua's doctor recommends 20 hours per week of IBI therapy. But for the past 27 months, Joshua has sat on a wait-list. Until May 1, Josh was just months away from being at the top of that list, but this government kicked him off that list, along with 2,000 other autistic kids—terrible.

Mr. Speaker, why is this Liberal government ignoring the medical recommendations of Joshua's doctor? Why shouldn't he receive the treatment that his doctor recommends? Who are we going to trust, the child's doctor, or the Liberal government's talking points?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I guess I would ask the Leader of the Opposition why he thinks it's appropriate to leave children on a waiting list not getting service. We don't think that that's appropriate. Some 16,000 more children will get service. I want that child to get the appropriate service that he needs. That's exactly—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is unconscionable to me, Mr. Speaker, that we would leave in place a system—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, second time. The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, come to order—and yes, it is the second time; there was too much heckling that you heard me the first time.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What is unconscionable is that the opposition parties, both of them, propose that we leave children on a waiting list and that we leave them without service. That is exactly what they're saying.

We are investing \$333 million to help children get the service that they need and get it much more quickly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?
1110

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier: The only people removing kids from the wait-list is this government—2,000 kids removed from the wait-list—but they don't want to own up to it.

Despite Joshua's doctor saying he needs 20 hours per week of IBI therapy, that wasn't the care he was receiving. Right now, Josh receives six hours of therapy per week at a cost of \$45, as that was all Josh's family could afford. Josh's father wrote a letter—and I want you to think about this. Josh's father said, "I cannot express how difficult it is to have your child's health care dictated by what you can afford rather than what the medical professionals say he needs."

Why can't Josh have the treatment that the doctor says he desperately needs? My challenge to the government, my question to the government is, how about this: Instead of putting money into expensive radio ads patting yourselves on the back, put it into IBI therapy for children.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Just a gentle reminder: You're weaving in and out of the Chair when you say "you." It's helpful to stay third person, please.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister Children and Youth Services will want to comment on the final supplementary.

It is exactly because I want and we want all those children, including Joshua, to move from a waiting list, where they're not getting service, into service, and for them to get the right intensity of service.

Last week, I spoke with a number of parents at events that I attended. Their concern is that they want the information about what that transition is going to look like. I understand that. I understand that they want to know what the service is going to look like. They don't want their children languishing on waiting lists, but they do want to know what the service is, which is why we are putting in place a transition—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So we'll just kick them off.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —to help those kids who are languishing on a waiting list get the service that they need. That's the point of the \$333-million investment and that is exactly what we're going to do. It would be irresponsible to leave those kids sitting on a waiting list, as the opposition suggests.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: You'll notice, Mr. Speaker, that I didn't get an answer about reinvesting the money in the self-congratulatory radio ads instead of putting it into children.

Back to the Premier: Joshua's father called the IBI therapy "hope." He told us that Josh struggles to convey basic wants and needs. He cannot dress and care for himself as his peers can. He cannot function in school without considerable support and accommodation. The letter the father wrote said that this government is "sentencing Joshua to a diminished life" and this government is "failing Joshua and his family."

Will the Premier reverse the changes to the IBI before sentencing Josh to a life that is diminished, which the father spoke so eloquently about? I believe autistic children deserve better, but then again, this is the same government that took autistic children and their families to court. It's shameful. Do the right thing. Will you reverse this decision? The Premier deserves to answer this herself.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I just really would like to understand—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker.

I just want to really fully understand what the opposition—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: —is saying. Does he want us not to invest 333 million new dollars? Does he not want us to create 16,000 new spaces for children?

The opposition and his critic have had the facts for some time and yet they don't have the facts straight, and this worries me, Speaker, because it's confusing families. I ask the Leader of the Opposition, I ask all members of the House, to get the information they need.

I would be pleased to talk to Josh's family. I have spent much time with many families in recent weeks. We are not taking kids off the wait-lists. We're putting them into immediate service, a new program with more intensity, longer duration, more—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question?

ELECTORAL REFORM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The Premier has written new legislation for how political parties and elections are financed behind closed doors, and we now see just how much outside involvement the Liberals actually—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'll be waiting as soon as I sit down.

Please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The assistant to the government House leader has written to the assistants of the opposition party House leaders to "offer a briefing on the draft election financing reform legislation"—a one-hour briefing with ministry officials to ask questions and discuss substantive issues. It is an insult to the people of Ontario.

Does the Premier really believe that a one-hour, behind-closed-doors meeting constitutes an open, transparent and non-partisan process?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What we said was that we wanted to get input from the opposition parties before we put the draft legislation into the public realm, because then there will be a long public consultation. We're proposing that the legislation go to committee after first reading, allowing for consultation over the summer, and then go to consultation again after second reading. So we're providing for that huge opportunity, which is very unusual in terms of legislation.

All we're saying to the leaders of the opposition parties is, would they like to have input as the legislation is drafted? Again, it's an unusual circumstance, but I think that this is a good opportunity. I've asked them for input. They have not given me input, but we would be happy to have input on the draft legislation.

If the briefing needs to be longer, we're happy to make it longer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The letter goes on to say, "In order to ensure enough space, we are extending the invitation to your House leader and two staff." There will be lots of space because we will not be attending a closed-door, meaningless charade of a meeting.

This is another PR stunt by this Premier. It is not a serious—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

The Minister of Agriculture; the Minister of Natural Resources, second time; and the deputy House leader, second time.

Finish, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: By the Premier's own account, she has avoided any semblance of an open and non-partisan process for over a year.

It's not too late to do what Democracy Watch, editorial boards, the Green Party, the PC Party and the NDP have all called for, which is to put aside her partisanship. Will she do that? Will she put aside her partisanship, do the right thing and agree to a non-partisan panel today? She still has a chance.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I really believe it is time to talk about the substance of the changes that need to happen. I was interested, at the beginning of this process, to know what the leader of the third party thought about union and corporate donations. I'm even more interested now in what she thinks about union and corporate donations.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock. Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think I know what I'm doing.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier says she had a revelation a year ago that she was going to change how political campaigns were funded. But instead of using that time for an open, transparent, fast-moving, non-partisan panel to set out the rules about how we get big money out of politics, she chose to spend the time filling the Liberal Party coffers. Now she's insisting that the only process that can work is one that's completely controlled by the Liberals at every step.

The only reason for the Premier to oppose a process that's open is her own political self-interest and the fact that she thinks the interests of the Liberal Party are more important than a transparent, non-partisan process for reform. Why is this Premier making election finance reform a case of, "My way or the highway?"

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think it's astonishing that the leader of the third party still will not talk about the substance of changes.

It's an interesting coincidence that the decision by the NDP to sell a building just before the changes were made, after it was announced that we were looking at making changes—it's an interesting coincidence. I am more interested today in what they think about union donations and loan guarantees. I'd love to have their input on that, given the circumstances in the last few weeks.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

1120

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Premier: Her muck-raking is not going to cover up the way that she's dealt with finance reform in this province.

Mental Health Week began yesterday, and since 2006, there has been a 54% increase in ER visits for children and youth facing mental health crises and a 60% increase in hospitalizations. After four years of frozen hospital budgets and a below-inflation increase this year, ER visits and wait times are increasing, while nurses are being fired in this province.

Will this Premier do the right thing and actually start to properly fund our hospitals and stop firing nurses?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The leader of the third party knows well that we have made a more than \$1-billion in-

vestment—a new investment—in the health care budget this year. Of that, approximately \$350 million, or more than 2%, goes directly and specifically into our hospitals.

It's true that as we've transformed the delivery of health care, as we've focused more on quality and outcomes—outcomes that are beneficial to patients—we've seen changes that have taken place across this province. But my expectation is that when hospitals make decisions, when they work with us to partner, when they work with us to improve the quality of services, they always have one thing at the forefront and front of mind, and that is making sure that the quality of care is the best that it can possibly be, that the services that Ontarians depend—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberal budget actually claims very clearly a 1% increase in the base funding of hospitals, not what this minister is trying to tell the House today.

In March, London Health Sciences announced that it would have to eliminate another 64.5 full-time positions because of Liberal cuts. At the same time, in the same city, St. Joseph's Health Care is closing 12 beds and 60 full-time positions are being cut. In my home city of Hamilton, Hamilton Health Sciences cut 97 positions and is faced with slashing \$30 million just to keep the lights on.

People expect the health care system to be there for them when they need it, but this Premier is forcing hospitals to make decisions based on deep Liberal cuts rather than on what's best for patients. Will this Premier stop slashing health care services that the people in this province deserve and rely on?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, we invest almost \$52 billion in our health care budget in this province, and we increased that amount by \$1 billion. But since the member opposite, the leader of the third party, is so interested in our budget and what was in there, I want to take the opportunity to remind Ontarians that in addition to the \$345 million of new funding to hospitals, which is a 2.1% increase to the hospitals' operating line, we're investing an additional \$12 billion over the next decade on infrastructure, on capital investments. In fact, we have 35 projects right across the province active today that are rebuilding, renovating and, in many cases, building entirely new hospitals. We're also providing \$50 million of additional funding each year for immediate repairs that are necessary for our hospitals. These are some of the things that we announced in this budget.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, come to order. Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Because of four years of Liberal budget freezes and a 1% base funding increase this year, far below inflation, all across Ontario, communities are seeing cuts to their hospitals. That is what's happen-

ing in this province. The government is on pace to fire twice as many nurses as last year. Nurses have been fired and health care has been cut in Orillia, Windsor, London, Hamilton, Sarnia, Kitchener-Waterloo, Cambridge, St. Thomas—and the list goes on and on, Speaker.

The Premier is cutting health care, and patients and families across this province are the ones who are paying the price. When will the Premier do the right thing and stop cutting hospital care?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Among the new investments that were outlined in our recent budget, we also allocated an additional \$85 million that goes specifically to our nurse practitioners, our dietitians and our occupational therapists in our family health teams and our community health centres to increase their remuneration—their take-home pay—and, most importantly, 75 million new dollars that go specifically towards end-of-life and palliative care. We're going to be funding 20 more hospices across the province.

We're continuing our investment in home and community care—an additional \$250 million this year. And, of course, the shingles vaccine: Saving Ontario seniors \$170—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As I was standing, I was going to give you one more sentence. I was just getting the attention of people. You have one sentence. Wrap up, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —and \$10 million for behavioural supports in our long-term-care facilities, Mr. Speaker.

CHILD PROTECTION INFORMATION NETWORK

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Premier. Last week, the coroner's inquest into the death of seven-year-old Katelynn Sampson delivered 173 recommendations. Two years ago, the coroner's inquest into Jeffrey Baldwin's death produced 103 recommendations. Clearly, the current child protection system is not serving Ontario's most vulnerable children well.

Both coroners' inquests have called for an Ontario-wide intake system and centralized database. Yet, 11 years since Jeffrey's murder, only 12 child protection agencies are using the centralized computer system, CPIN; 41 children's aid societies are still waiting.

Minister, we owe it to Katelynn and Jeffrey to have CPIN operating across Ontario. Why the delay?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the Katelynn Sampson jury inquest for their very thoughtful work. Their recommendations and consideration of how we support and protect our children are incredibly valuable. My ministry will, of course, consider each jury recommendation to ensure that we help prevent similar tragedies in the future.

It is important to note that, since the prior inquest that the member mentioned, we've already completed a num-

ber of actions, including requiring non-parents seeking custody—they must provide the court with police checks and a child record search.

We've made considerable progress in strengthening our child welfare system, but I do recognize that there is more to do. We'll continue to work hard for the protection of our children in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: The jury has done their job; it's now time for the minister to do hers.

In 2013-14, this government paid \$8 million to Deloitte to consult on the software design that CPIN would run on. In 2014-15, they paid \$5.7 million to Deloitte. Why is this money going to consultants instead of the children's aid societies waiting to access CPIN? We owe it to Jeffrey Baldwin and Katelynn Sampson to get this right. When will the Premier stop spending money on high-priced consultants and allow all children's aid protection agencies access to CPIN?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I've talked about CPIN—the Child Protection Information Network—in this House before. We're creating that system precisely because we want to prevent the kinds of tragedies that have happened to children in this province before.

This system will create one record for every child so that all information can be shared across children's aid societies. Our intent and hope is that it prevents future tragedies from happening. We have a number of agencies already on the network. We have more agencies coming online this spring.

1130

It's very important that we get this right. I think everyone can agree that 100% accuracy is required in such a critical system that hosts case files of children in care. I will not speed this up and compromise protection of children in this province. I will continue to work as fast as we can, as responsibly as we can.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. Over the last few days we've learned that the people of Ontario will once again be forced to pay for this government's incompetence when it comes to the SAMS file. The disastrous implementation of SAMS hurt some of the most vulnerable people in this province, and now we know that the minister knew of the problems all along.

The Auditor General highlighted concerns of consultants overseeing consultants in her last scathing report. In response, the Premier has decided to hire the same consultants to fix the issues they got wrong in the first place, and to pay them an extra \$32 million, adding insult to injury.

Will the Premier admit she has failed vulnerable citizens and front-line workers across the province and demand her minister's resignation immediately?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we recognize that there were challenges with the initial implementation of SAMS. We have said that. The minister has said that. We asked for a review. We looked for recommendations to help us to fix the system, and following the report of the review, the implementation of a transition plan was put in place to address the exact challenges that were still remaining with SAMS.

We fixed 100% of the priority issues that were identified by the front line, and I think that's what's critical. The minister went to the front lines. She met with the people who were working with the system. She talked to them about what the challenges were and addressed those challenges as they were identified by the people who were having to work with this new system, so I am satisfied that that work has been undertaken.

Can we learn from that process? Absolutely, and I think it's incumbent upon us to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Let me get this right. The minister didn't see the internal memo addressed to her, outlining these problems. She didn't see the interim report highlighting the same problems. She apparently didn't know about the implementation problems multiple jurisdictions experienced with SAMS-like programs. She just had no idea what was going on in her own ministry when it came to SAMS.

Speaker, the minister should know what's going on in her ministry. Now the people of Ontario are left to pay the price again. Will the Premier hold this minister to account and demand her resignation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the member opposite will have read the whole memo. She will know that there were issues that were identified and there were assurances to the minister that those issues were being dealt with. That is the reality of an implementation of a complex and large system: that issues are identified, and then there is a request from the minister's office that they be dealt with, then the assurance that they are being dealt with.

Now, were there still challenges that remained when SAMS was being implemented? Absolutely. But I'll go back to the previous question about the implementation of CPIN. We've got one opposition party saying, "Hurry up. Implement a system more quickly. Put kids at risk and don't be careful," and we've got another party saying, "You should have slowed down."

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, we have dealt with the issues around SAMS and have learned from that process. They are complex implementations and we are going to make sure that we get them right in the future.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, we know that one in five young people in Ontario experiences problems with mental health. We also know that 70% of men-

tal health and addiction problems begin in childhood and adolescence, and we know that the stigma associated with mental health remains one of the largest barriers to diagnosis, treatment and acceptance in the community.

Agencies across the province, like Addiction and Mental Health Services KFL&A and Pathways for Children and Youth in my community of Kingston and the Islands, provide important mental health and social services. We know how important community-based programs are.

Minister, as this week is Children and Youth Mental Health Week, can you please update the House on the work being done by your ministry to support children and youth with the mental health challenges that they face?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Kingston and the Islands for this very important question during Children's Mental Health Week.

As the Minister of Children and Youth, I'm very committed to the mental health and well-being of children and youth in our province. Ontario's mental health and addictions strategy is making a real difference across the province. We're investing more than \$444 million in child and youth mental health services, and recently we announced \$6 million to hire 80 additional mental health workers across Ontario. Those workers are being placed where the need is the greatest in different communities. This work was done in consultation with our lead agencies for children's mental health.

On Children's Mental Health Week, I want to reiterate our commitment and, I believe, the commitment of everyone in this House to support youth and support them to reach their full potential.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I'm pleased to hear that significant investments have been made.

In my own riding of Kingston and the Islands, I was delighted to announce that at Pathways for Children and Youth a new mental health worker will be hired to work specifically with LGBTQ youth experiencing mental health illnesses. This is something that the Kingston community identified as a need, and now that need is being addressed. We know that the sooner we help young people, the more likely they are to participate actively in school, lead healthy lives and continue to contribute to their communities.

For this reason, Mr. Speaker, I ask, through you to the Minister of Children and Youth Services: Can you please tell this House about these mental health and addiction workers and how that makes a difference?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: As the member said, the funding focuses on community needs when accessing mental health services in different parts of the province for our children and youth. In Ottawa, for example, the Centre Psychosocial is hiring two new mental health workers to provide counselling for francophone children and youth; in and around Thunder Bay there's a mobile response unit being developed to respond to children and youth in distress in rural communities; and in southern

Ontario, St. Clair Child and Youth Services is expanding walk-in sites in Lambton. And we're working very closely with First Nations leaders in the province to respond to the mental health needs of indigenous youth.

With our ongoing support and the partnerships of many community groups, our government will continue to work to help all young people in our great province reach their full potential.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is directed to the Premier. Maybe she'll answer my question; she refused to answer the member from Kitchener–Waterloo's question on SAMS.

Transition costs to fully implement SAMS are a staggering \$52 million. Much of it is going towards fixing the program and paying service managers for all their cost overruns. That money was not included in the government's original cost projections.

A number of questions could be asked concerning this issue. Does the Premier believe that IBM, the software company responsible for SAMS, did a good job? Or does she hold them responsible for the 2,400 serious system defects and the \$140 million in benefit calculation errors? But here's the question that needs an answer; it is a simple question. Whose fault was it: the government's or IBM's?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I've said before, we recognize that there were challenges with the initial implementation of SAMS and that's why we asked for a review. We asked PwC to conduct a review and help us to improve the system. Following their report, we announced the implementation of a transition plan to address the outstanding issues with SAMS. We've fixed 100% of the priority issues identified by front-line staff and 95% of the defects that were identified by the Auditor General.

I think that it's a legitimate question for the opposition to ask: "Have the challenges been fixed? Are people getting the service that they need?" The answer to that is yes. We have addressed the issues and the services are being provided to the people of Ontario as they are required.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: The Premier hasn't held anyone accountable. But it gets worse: The government is rewarding IBM with a \$32-million contract to service the same flawed software they created. Caseworkers and service providers are frustrated, but none of this money will be going to fix that because the government claims that priority problems have been fixed. I think service providers, caseworkers and recipients would disagree. The Premier and the minister have offered no apology. Moreover, the Premier has done nothing to restore anyone's trust in her and her government.

Speaker, why hasn't she fired her minister?

1140

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's deal with the reality. The member opposite is talking about a maintenance contract. As I said, we recognize that there were challenges with the rollout of SAMS—100% of the priority issues that were identified by front-line staff. Those are the challenges that obviously were the most egregious and needed to be addressed, and they have been addressed.

The maintenance contract has nothing to do with the transition to SAMS or with addressing the issues that arose during the initial transition, Mr. Speaker. It's a separate process. It's a routine contract to assist with the ongoing operation of the system, just as we had under the former system that had been put in place by the previous government.

Organizations of all types and sizes depend on professional, specialized IT—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think the fingers can be pointed everywhere.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're not. Please finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We used an open, fair and competitive process for this contract and we followed all of the procurement rules. The total cost of maintaining SAMS will be about \$55 million per year, which is \$5 million less than under the previous system. So there is actually a cost saving to that maintenance.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is for the Premier. For the last few weeks, a group of produce workers at the Ontario Food Terminal, Tibetan refugees from my own riding of Parkdale–High Park, have been on strike for a first contract against their employer, Fresh Taste, for fair wages and better treatment.

As an editorial on the weekend put it, these workers sort "the produce you find at your ... big box grocery store." They're also among the lowest paid, making \$5 less an hour than other unionized workers at the terminal.

The company has brought in replacement workers who may be operating tow motors and other equipment that they're not certified to use. We've called in the Minister of Labour to inspect.

Does the Premier think it's acceptable that non-certified replacement workers take the jobs of some of our most vulnerable workers who are just looking, after all, for a fair deal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for this important question because I think when we see people out on the picket line, like we're seeing right now at Fresh Taste, people think that there has got to be a better way to do this. I think in Ontario we have found that.

Today's labour relations record is the best we have had in 35 years, Speaker. This is such an uncharacteristic

event in Ontario. Right now, about 98% of labour settlements in Ontario are reached without any strike or any lockout.

We're paying attention to this. Our mediators are in there. They're working with the parties. Labour negotiations are tough. They're tough on the employers. They're tough on the unions. They're tough on the employees.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Speaker. I know in this particular case we've got a mediator in there who has been in touch with the parties. What he's asking is that the parties come back to the table and stay at the table. I have full confidence that a deal will be reached here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: We know that unionized workplaces pay better. We know they have better protections. That's why the striking Fresh Taste workers are looking to join other workers at the Ontario Food Terminal in ratifying a first contract that will see them receive at least a fair wage.

We know that the labour laws in this province are being reviewed, but these vulnerable workers can't wait for the results of that review.

Will the Premier move our labour laws into the 21st century and commit to banning the use of replacement workers that needlessly drag out labour disputes and harm Ontarians?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for the supplementary. When we have a labour dispute like we're seeing at Fresh Taste, our first focus goes on assisting the parties with the collective bargaining process. We've got some of the best mediators in the country. I think we've got some of the best mediators on the continent. They're very skilled individuals, and they've got a tremendous record.

The consultations are over on the Changing Workplaces Review. For the past year or so, we've had two of the top labour people travelling the province, asking people what their opinions are on these types of issues. We looked at the Labour Relations Act. We're looking at the Employment Standards Act. That information is being gathered. Within a few weeks, that information will be made public. Consultations will take place again after that. Input will be gathered. I think it's a review we should stay on top of. I'd urge all members to stay tuned.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the Minister of Education. We all know how committed our government is to helping our kids become lifelong learners. As the mother of two young boys in the Catholic school board, I value this commitment. Earlier this year, Minis-

ter, you announced increased funding for education to \$22.9 billion, an increase of 59% since 2003.

I've had the pleasure of visiting many schools in my riding of Davenport and was very pleased to hear that students are achieving higher test scores, with 72% of students achieving the provincial standard in grades 3 and 6, up 18 points from 54% in 2002-03.

The Premier and the minister made a very special announcement this morning regarding graduation rates across the province. Can the minister please tell us about this announcement?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd like to thank the member for Davenport for that question.

Speaker, we were really pleased to announce today that Ontario's high school graduation rate has increased to the highest level in the province's history, with more students than ever graduating with the skills and knowledge they need to reach their full potential. Today at York Mills Collegiate Institute in Toronto, we announced that in 2015 the five-year graduation rate surpassed the government's goal of 85%. We have reached the 85% mark. In fact, the graduation rate has increased more than 17 percentage points since 2004, when it was just 68%.

For the second year in a row, Ontario is publishing school-board-level graduation rates from all across the province. This gives parents, students, teachers and school boards access to data that can inform efforts to improve even further.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'm extremely pleased to hear this fantastic news. This is an excellent example of how committed we are to ensuring that our youngest learners become successful. Despite this great news, we know that there is more work that can be done.

Our government has introduced a number of programs through its Student Success Strategy that are credited with helping to sharply boost graduation rates since 2004. These include Specialist High Skills Majors, dual credits, and expanded co-operative education and focused support where student data showed it was needed.

Minister, please explain how these programs have helped our students achieve better results and, in turn, increase the rate of graduating.

Hon. Liz Sandals: These programs, delivered by our wonderful teachers and education workers as part of our government's Student Success Strategy, have helped increase the percentage of students graduating—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A little longer each time.

Minister?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Yes. With everyone working together, the percentage of students graduating within five years of starting high school in grade 9 is up to 85.5% in 2015, up from 84.3% in 2014. The percentage of students graduating within four years is also up. It reached 78.3% this year. That's 22 percentage points up from the original four-year graduation rate when we first started this project.

1150

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Minister of Health. Alexandre Larcade is a 26-year-old adult with autism, from my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka. In December, he had an adverse reaction to medication and ended up mechanically and chemically restrained in the psych ward at Orillia hospital. He's still in hospital. His mother, Anne, has been doing everything she can to get Alex the treatment he needs to help him recover and get him home to Huntsville.

Since when do we keep autistic people in psych wards instead of giving them therapy and supports to return to a life of inclusion in the community? Specifically, the shortage of dual diagnosis practitioners and psychiatrists and of beds in a therapeutic treatment centre is the problem.

Will the minister assist Alexandre and his mom to get the proper treatment he needs so he can return home?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: This is exactly the kind of question that I appreciate getting. Of course, it is even more helpful when members from whatever political party come to me if they've got challenges being faced by their constituents. I'm committed to actually working with the member opposite to see if we can provide that supportive care in the community, in the home, for Alexandre and his family, his loved ones, who are so deserving of that support.

It is challenging for individuals, who do face their own unique circumstances, but my sole responsibility as Minister of Health is to make sure that we're providing the highest quality care that we can. Sometimes it requires us looking at specific challenges and specific individuals from the perspective of the patient, their family and the community to see how we can provide those necessary supports. I'd like to see if we can do that here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the Minister of Health—and thank you for that response.

Speaker, you can imagine how difficult this has been for Alexandre and his family. Alex would like to recover with therapy somewhere other than a psych ward and has become very frustrated, scared, tired and anxious. He now has PTSD and anxiety, and has temporarily regressed due to the restraint and drug trauma after living in the psych ward. I think anyone would, after four months in hospital.

I've met Alex under better circumstances, and he is a happy, insightful, good person. His mom wants to help him return home.

The Mental Health Crisis Line advises parents of autistic adult children to go to the United States to get proper treatment. Through the Speaker: Minister, if proper treatment is not available in Ontario, will the government immediately cover the cost of treatment in the United States for Alex and other autistic adults?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I do appreciate the follow-up. I think it points to some of the challenges that individuals

who have ASD, autism spectrum disorder, have. As they age, as they grow from being children and youth into adulthood, children and youth services in those initial moments—the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community and Social Services all work together in a coordinated way to try to ensure that that transition period takes place in a coordinated, effective manner. But when individuals with ASD become adults, there's no question that those challenges remain.

It's wonderful to hear the experience that the member opposite has had with this individual and his potential. We need to work together to ensure that that individual is able to reach his full potential. I commit to working with the member to do just that.

CHILD PROTECTION

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Premier. Eight years ago, seven-year-old Katelynn Sampson was murdered by two caregivers who previously had children removed from them by CAS. On a note written before she was found, Katelynn had written 62 times, "I am a awful girl that's why know one wants me."

The inquest into her death led to 173 recommendations on Friday. The most important was to overhaul the child welfare, judicial and education systems to hear and value children's voices and wishes. As the judge in the initial case stated, alarm bells were ringing and no one was responding.

Speaker, will the Premier do the right thing and immediately implement Katelynn's Principle, the core recommendation of the inquest?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the critic for raising this important question.

I appreciate that the jury has given us many clear and concrete recommendations. I am, of course, studying those recommendations and looking specifically at the Katelynn's Principle one, along with all the other ones, to make sure they are all given their due consideration.

I also recognize the call from the jury to make further changes in child welfare. I have indicated in this House some actions that I've already taken and an action plan that we are working on to continue to strengthen child welfare in Ontario and make the system as strong as it can be for our most vulnerable children.

We do recognize that all these recommendations are important. Many of them are to my ministry, some are to education and some are to other ministries, so we'll be coordinating that response across government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Back to the Premier. It is undeniable that Katelynn was failed in every possible way during her short life. She was failed by a system that is broken and doesn't properly protect our most vulnerable children, a system that placed her with a man who had allegedly sexually assaulted two other young girls, a

system that didn't respond when half a dozen calls concerning Katelynn in the months before her death were made.

The Premier has said that once she has the information and evidence necessary, she would make change. The information is in front of her. The time for change is now.

Again, will the Premier immediately ensure that children are at the centre of child welfare in the province and that their voices are heard and valued?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: As I've mentioned in previous questions, we've taken a number of actions to strengthen child protection in Ontario. I agree with the member opposite that children have to be front and centre in consideration of how we continue to transform child welfare in Ontario.

We are working closely with all of our partners. I know that our child advocate, Irwin Elman, has given voice to this as well, as have others in the community and this sector.

We will keep building on strengthening the system, whether that is through the Child Protection Information Network or whether that's through increased accountability and transparency for children's aid societies, and we will make that progress, Speaker. I'm committing to make that progress to strengthen child welfare in Ontario.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. As the member for Kitchener Centre, I know how important transit is for people who are living in my community. In fact, those who are in the tech sector, advanced manufacturing, the insurance industry and academia in my community, on a daily basis, are travelling along the super corridor between Waterloo region and the GTA.

With Ontario's population growing and with cities and towns across the province thriving, I've heard the minister say time and time again that our government is working to build an integrated transit system that will connect communities, people and businesses across our province. But in my region, people want to see action. My constituents want to know that their government is making investments that truly count.

Can the minister please tell members of this House what our government is doing to help connect people and communities across Ontario?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking the member from Kitchener Centre for being an extraordinary champion for her community and for her region.

She is 100% right. We are seeing unprecedented growth in communities across the province, whether it's in Kitchener or, Speaker, in places like Brantford, Ontario. I was actually very happy to be in Brantford last week to announce that we will be introducing GO bus service in this community.

Speaker, as you may know, this is a community that is showing tremendous growth in terms of the talent and

capital that it's attracting. Thanks to the advocacy from the member from Brant, starting this September, we will run 26 trips every weekday from downtown Brantford to the Aldershot GO station in Burlington, with a stop along the way at McMaster University. We will also be running 18 trips on both Saturdays and Sundays.

Investments like these give commuters more transit options and help connect communities like Brantford to the GO rail network and to the GTHA more generally.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I want to thank the minister for his response, and I want to commend him and his staff for advancing better transit in our province. They're working very hard on this file.

1200

I know that people who are living in Kitchener Centre are very excited to hear that we are making investments that are helping to connect communities across Ontario. It's very encouraging to know that we are continuing to work to deliver on our promise to bring all-day, two-way GO train service to Kitchener.

Both GO bus service to Brantford, as you just heard, and all-day GO train service to Kitchener were in the 2016 budget, which is further proof that we are delivering on our transportation commitments.

Mr. Speaker, the minister was recently in Waterloo region to announce a very important local investment. I know that the mayor of Cambridge, Doug Craig, and the regional chair, Ken Seiling, and my colleague the MPP for Cambridge have been lobbying very hard for this. Can the minister please tell members—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank the member for her question.

It's a shame that opposition members aren't listening more closely. Perhaps they could learn a thing or two about actually building transit here in the province of Ontario.

In addition to the announcement in Brantford, we were pleased to announce that, as of this fall, we will be expanding GO bus service for Cambridge. I want to thank the member from Cambridge, who serves as my parliamentary assistant, for her advocacy and leadership.

We know that introducing GO bus service in these communities will make a real and positive difference for Cambridge, for Kitchener and, of course, for Brantford and communities right across the province. Whether it's for a high school student from Brantford who is considering post-secondary or an employee working in Cambridge, we know that increasing connections for these communities is crucial to our continued economic growth.

I want to thank the member from Kitchener and the member from Cambridge, and, Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge that the member from St. Catharines has passed me the business case for Niagara GO rail.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the environment minister. Beef farmers have been effectively reducing greenhouse gas emissions for the last 30 years, but that didn't stop the minister from suggesting that Ontarians should stop eating red meat on Mondays. Obviously, this would hurt the beef industry, and it completely ignores the good work Ontario farmers are doing.

Even Liberal candidate of record and former OMAFRA staffer Stewart Skinner slammed the minister's idea, saying on Twitter that now the minister is "attacking livestock farmers, he ignores fertilizer value of manure, soil health, carbon capture potential of silvopasture."

Mr. Speaker, did the minister clarify his meatless Monday policy position with the Premier or the current Minister of Agriculture? Or is this another example of him putting his foot in his mouth?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Well, as you would know, you never know when I'm going to strike. So the member from Prince Edward-Hastings—second time.

Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Sometimes you can't win for love or money, Mr. Speaker. I was laughing when she said Twitter, because the Minister of Northern Development and Mines was—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Tell us about the nukes, Glen.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, warning.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —severely criticized for eating meat and promoting beef out in front with the beef farmers last year by a certain class of environmentalists.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting, because one of the things I did say—and I think this is common knowledge—is that if you did not eat meat one day a week for a year, that's the equivalent of a carbon dioxide reduction of not driving your car 3,800 kilometres.

I actually love beef. I love hamburgers, and I eat them regularly. I think they're great.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude by saying one thing, if I can get this out, because it's important. We're actually working with beef farmers right now on an enzyme that will—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary. The member from Haldimand-Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, we just heard the Minister of the Environment's position on climate change and his hoof-in-mouth attitude toward livestock agriculture. However, when will the Minister of Agriculture speak up? Where are the incentives for not only farmers, but also agri-food and forestry to capture and sequester carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases?

The Beef Farmers of Ontario and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture have put forward practical, doable climate change proposals, but in contrast to other minis-

tries, OMAFRA did not get the budgeted Green Investment Fund.

We've heard from the Minister of the Environment. When will we hear from the Minister of Agriculture on this, who consistently seems to be not only no action, but no talk? When will he speak up?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'd like to continue this conversation with my colleague the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Just for the record, I had a barbequed steak on Sunday—corn-fed beef—and it was delicious.

To respond to my friend from Haldimand-Norfolk, through the climate change process, my ministry has been very involved on a step-by-step basis as we go forward. I've had very productive discussions with my good friend the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. I would say to the members opposite, just wait until we unveil the plan. There will be something substantial for agriculture in the province of Ontario.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to correct my record. I think I said that Ontario's nuclear facilities are 90% emissions free; in fact, it's our entire electricity system that is 90% emissions free.

BIRTH OF MEMBER'S GRANDCHILD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Davenport on a point of order.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I just want to take a moment to congratulate my seatmate, the MPP for Cambridge, on becoming a first-time grandmother this past Friday, April 29, to a beautiful baby girl, Magda Maria McGarry.

LEGISLATIVE INTERNS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on a point of order.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to introduce my summer interns, who are here in the gallery with us today. We have Vivian Lüthi-Yang and Anthony Piruzza.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton Mountain on a point of order.

Miss Monique Taylor: I am so proud to welcome Tim Goodacre to the House today. He's one of our Special Olympics folks from the Hamilton Skating Club. He's here with his parents, Mary and Robert. Welcome to Queen's Park.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Beaches-East York on a point of order.

Mr. Arthur Potts: During introduction of pages this morning, my riding wasn't named correctly. I just want to reaffirm what I said in the introduction: that my page, Spencer Couch, knows that he lives in Beaches–East York.

Interjection: He's correcting the Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think he's challenging the Chair, myself.

The Speaker will always admit to a mistake. If that's the case, we'll check Hansard, and then I'll come back to you and let you know.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS ATHLETES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do have one reminder. We have a very large contingent of Special Olympics athletes here. I am inviting all members to meet us on the grand staircase immediately after question period for one giant photo, for their keepsake, of athletes representing Ontario.

Next, also a reminder that later on this afternoon, at 4:30, there is a lobby day for Special Olympians. They're not asking for anything; they just want to meet their members.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1209 to 1500.

DISPLAY OF FIRE HELMET

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Niagara Falls on a point of order.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe we have unanimous consent to allow the Niagara-on-the-Lake fire helmet to be put on my desk while I read my member's statement. They are celebrating their 200-year anniversary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Niagara Falls is seeking unanimous consent to display the helmet for firefighters for their 200th anniversary. Do we agree? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's my pleasure to introduce Mr. Juliusz Kirejczyk, the president of the Canadian-Polish Congress, Toronto branch, and many other members of the Polish-Canadian community, who are celebrating Polish Constitution Day with us today. Witamy!

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. Glad you're with us.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, I don't have the names of everyone here. I just want to recognize the Canadian-Polish Congress, the Polish Canadian Women's Federation, the Friends of Polish Scouting association, the Polish Combatants' Association and the Polish Students' Initiative of Canada, who are here with us today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Each year, one in five Canadians will experience a mental health or addiction problem. It's a troubling statistic, Speaker, when you consider that many who experience it do it alone.

I tip my hat to the member from Nepean–Carleton, who bravely stood tall so that she could inspire more people to come forward. Congratulations.

That's why today I'm also proud to share with you the good work that local business in Huron–Bruce is doing to help end stigmas and start conversations.

Yesterday, Speaker, Bruce Power launched its #BreakTheSilence campaign on social media with the goal of raising money to help support local mental health initiatives and getting the conversation going on mental health.

I'd also like to acknowledge Wes for Youth Online as well as #GetInTouchForHutch. They are two amazing online systems that reach out and help young people deal with their issues.

Going back to Bruce Power's initiative, it has been inspired by #BellLetsTalk. For every like, share or retweet of the hashtag on Facebook and Twitter, Bruce Power will be donating one dollar, and up to \$80,000 in total, to a local initiative in Bruce, Grey and Huron counties that helps support people living with mental illness issues.

As part of the campaign, Bruce Power has also launched a website, breakthesilencebgh.com, which provides an overview of other initiatives that Bruce Power has worked on to combat stigmas around mental health, as well as a list of local and regional resources for people who need help.

I'd like to encourage my fellow MPPs, no matter what party lines we may sit behind, to join the conversation and spread the word. Please take to your social media platform of choice this week and #BreakTheSilence.

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you for allowing me to speak today. I'd like to use my time today to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Niagara-on-the-Lake fire department and the incredible firefighters there.

Founded in 1816 in response to fires started by the Americans in the War of 1812, the first fire department in the province was the Niagara-on-the-Lake fire station. It was built in the Market Square and stored buckets, axes and ladders that the first volunteers used.

By 1826, the Niagara fire department became the first in Ontario to be created by an order in council.

As Niagara continued to flourish, more stations were added: Queenston, Virgil, Glendale and St. Davids. In fact, the St. Davids station is also celebrating a milestone, with its 75th anniversary this year.

The 110 men and women who are part of the fire department today all volunteer for the department and for charities in their community. As it was in 1816, these great members of our community use their time both on and off the force to serve.

No one understands or respects our first responders more than myself. For two centuries, these brave men and women have been saving lives and making life better for the people of Niagara-on-the-Lake and surrounding towns, and for families like mine.

I want to commend the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake on this occasion. I want to congratulate the town's fire department on their 200th anniversary, making them one of the oldest fire departments, if not the oldest, in all of Canada. I say to them, as well as to my colleagues here, thank you, thank you, thank you.

STREETSVILLE VILLAGE LITTER BLITZ

Mr. Bob Delaney: Early each May, ward 11 city councillor George Carlson organizes an annual Village Litter Blitz. This Saturday, May 7, in Streetsville, is the fifth annual chance to get some exercise and to tidy up our historic community.

The 2016 blitz will take place at Centre Plaza, located at 128 Queen Street South in Streetsville, between 2 o'clock and 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Students will receive volunteer hours for their efforts. Following the cleanup is an annual barbecue and refreshments served by the Streetsville Lions Club.

This year's annual Village Litter Blitz is supported by the Streetsville Business Improvement Association, all of the cadets, Streetsville's Rotary Clubs, the Lions Club, Scouts and others.

Councillor Carlson is the driving force behind this event, ensuring that all residents of Streetsville can join their friends and families to spruce up Streetsville's environment. Experience worldwide shows that the more regularly people clean up their common living spaces, the more likely a community and its many back lots and forgotten corners will remain free of litter and spray-painted graffiti.

Come and meet me, our cat Merlin, and other local elected representatives on Saturday at 2 p.m. at the Centre Plaza in Streetsville and pitch in and do a little bit of your part in helping keep Streetsville clean.

POLISH CONSTITUTION DAY

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the PC caucus and our leader, Patrick Brown, to mark the occasion of May 3, Polish Constitution Day. The adoption of the Polish constitution in 1791 is an event of great pride for Poland and a significant moment in the history of democracy.

Poland's constitution is Europe's very first democratic constitution. It has become the symbol of Polish resilience and independence, especially during the years of partitions and Nazi and Soviet occupation. The values

of freedom, democracy and the rule of law which this day celebrates are values that Canada shares with Poland.

Ontario is home to half a million Canadians of Polish heritage. Today I'm pleased to welcome Juliusz Kirejczyk, president of the Canadian-Polish Congress, Toronto branch, and many members of Polonia to the Legislature.

Earlier today I was thrilled to participate in a reception celebrating this important day, and I'm looking forward to participating in the Polish flag-raising this coming weekend.

In Poland, the anniversary of May 3 has been observed as the most important civil holiday since Poland regained independence in 1918. May 3 is free from work, and there are many celebrations, parades, exhibitions and public events. I extend my warmest wishes to all Polish Canadians celebrating May 3, Constitution Day.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise today as MPP for London West to provide an update on my community's rapid transit initiative, Shift London. Currently, London is Canada's largest urban centre without a rapid transit system, yet it has more per capita transit ridership than any other comparable city.

To engage the community in the development of Shift, an extensive consultation process was undertaken, which generated near-unanimous support from Londoners for rapid transit. Some \$125 million has been allocated by council toward the cost of rapid transit, and in November 2015, councillors endorsed a hybrid LRT/BRT route as its early preferred option.

This week, council will be meeting to consider a revised option for full BRT, based on a staff business case that considers multiple factors. Chief among these is the \$300-million cost difference between the hybrid option and full BRT and which of these two options are more likely to be funded by upper levels of government.

1510

Speaker, \$15 billion has been dedicated by the government for transit projects outside the GTA, and the 2016 budget committed to cost-sharing the capital costs of municipal transit projects. As the urban hub of southwestern Ontario, an investment in rapid transit in London will have a major positive impact on the entire region. But good local planning about the best transit option requires a firm provincial funding commitment. I call on this Liberal government to let London know today whether and how much it is prepared to invest in this transformative city-building transit initiative.

HOSPICE CARE

Mr. John Fraser: Last Sunday, I had the opportunity to join hundreds of people at Carleton University for Hospice Care Ottawa's annual Hike for Hospice. Despite the cool, wet weather, families and friends gathered to raise thousands of dollars to support hospice, palliative

and end-of-life care in our community. Hospice Care Ottawa has 19 beds at the May Court and Central West locations, and a number of community programs that provide compassionate care and support for families.

I know they're looking forward, with community support, to breaking ground on the Ruddy-Shenkman Hospice in the coming months.

Hospices like May Court and Central West are special places. They accompany families along a loved one's last journey, and they are indeed rest stations between heaven and earth.

I would like to congratulate Hospice Care Ottawa on another successful hike. Thanks to all those who worked hard to make it possible, but most importantly a special thanks to all the staff and volunteers for the compassionate care they provide every day to families at a very important time.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Steve Clark: May 1 was a sad day, as families in Leeds–Grenville were sent reeling by yet another hydro rate hike. Too many are literally being left in the dark, unable to afford skyrocketing bills under this government. Every day I hear heartbreaking stories from young parents, seniors on fixed incomes and folks in between.

Before he gives another non-answer in question period, I'd invite the energy minister to spend just one day in my office talking to moms like Tracy, who says, "We have to choose between paying hydro, rent and food every month ... we pay what we can with every paycheque, which leaves us with nothing in the bank between pays."

"I use the local food bank every month (great people) but it is not enough for a family of five."

John and Christine's monthly bill has doubled since buying their home in Oxford Mills in 2012.

They are the faces of the crisis created by this government's disastrous energy policies, but the minister's only concern is those with pockets deep enough to attend his private fundraisers. The struggles of those who can't pay the hydro bill and put food on the table are ignored.

Well, I'm standing up today for those Ontarians in my riding. I'm using my voice to demand that the government get hydro rates under control to give desperate families a break before more people suffer.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I am proud to rise today to recognize and congratulate the recipients of the 2016 Ontario Volunteer Service Awards. Presented annually since 1986, the volunteer service awards recognize individual volunteers for continuous years of commitment and dedicated service to an organization.

This year, Ontario is celebrating the contributions of more than 11,000 volunteers at 54 award ceremonies across the province. The awards recognize people volunteering their time to organizations like the Canadian Red

Cross, and helping out with community projects. Certificates and customized trillium pins will be awarded to people with five to 60 or more years of service. Youth will also be recognized for two or more years of volunteer service.

In my riding of York Centre, I'm honoured to present 27 awards representing an astounding accumulation of 342 years of volunteer service. These awards represent a way for me and the government of Ontario to thank the thousands of volunteers who are relied on every day, like Alan Marks, who has dedicated 50 years to the Canadian Diabetes Association; or youth volunteers like Michael Kulik and Andres and Christina Llivicura, who volunteer with St. John's Rehab at Sunnybrook.

The selfless work of these volunteers has a tremendous impact. People of all ages and diverse backgrounds can come together in their community and experience a higher quality of life. We are truly grateful for their accomplishments.

POLISH CONSTITUTION DAY

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to recognize May 3, Polish Constitution Day, a very important national holiday in Poland.

Polish Constitution Day celebrates the declaration of the constitution of May 3, 1791, one of the landmark achievements in the history of Poland. This historic document was the first democratic constitution in Europe and second in the world only to the US Constitution.

Despite being in effect for only 19 months, the constitution of 1791 helped inspire Poles to have an independent and just society for generations. It did not save the Polish state at the time, but it did save the Polish nation. Although the celebration was banned under various authoritarian regimes between 1792 and 1990, Constitution Day is now openly and proudly celebrated in Poland and around the world each year.

Today members of Polonia are at Queen's Park to commemorate this important day, and I would like to specifically recognize Mr. Juliusz Kirejczyk, president of the Canadian-Polish Congress, Toronto branch, and the other distinguished community leaders who helped organize and celebrate this 225th anniversary. I want to thank these community leaders for all of their efforts in keeping our Polish traditions and heritage strong in Ontario.

Remarks in Polish.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order: the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for indulging me in this point of order, and you may rule otherwise.

I just noticed that a very good and close friend of mine, Randy Marusyk, is in the House. Randy lives in the great riding of Ottawa Centre and has been a friend for a

long time. He has been a believer in me from the very first day that I decided to seek public office, so I just wanted to welcome Randy Marusyk to the House. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, you're right, that's not a point of order. It's closer to a statement, actually.

I thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated May 3, 2016, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking is unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 43 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice of ballot item 43 be waived. Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PROBATION AND PAROLE OFFICERS

AGENTS DE PROBATION ET DE LIBÉRATION CONDITIONNELLE

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's a pleasure to rise in the Legislature to mark Probation Officers' Week and recognize the outstanding contributions of the dedicated probation and parole officers across Ontario who keep our communities safe.

I would like to welcome a few friends who are in the gallery for these statements and for an important announcement that we made earlier. I want to welcome

Monte Vieselmeyer, who is the chair of corrections for the management employee relations committee; Alex Sawicki, who is the second vice-president of OPSEU Local 369 Executive; Tammy Carson, who is the provincial health and safety co-chair for OPSEU; Greg Arnold, who is a member of MERC; and Martin Ohis, Lawrence Augustine and Horatio Uproots, who are here with us at Queen's Park. I also want to recognize Gord Longhi, who is also a member of the OPSEU executive and who is unable to join us today. I want to thank them for their hard work.

I want to thank the Probation Officers Association of Ontario for their role in establishing this week and helping to ensure that we take the time to celebrate the great work that probation and parole officers do in communities across the province each and every day. Probation and parole officers, along with all correctional staff, are an essential part of Ontario's justice system.

Les agents de probation et de libération conditionnelle, avec tout le personnel des services correctionnels, jouent un rôle essentiel au sein du système de justice de l'Ontario.

1520

I've had the pleasure of visiting probation and parole offices in communities across Ontario, and these visits are one of most rewarding parts of my job. When I ask them how the ministry can help, their responses are always focused on helping their clients, how to provide more opportunities and help them become a part of building safer, stronger communities. The passion, dedication and hard work they bring to changing the lives of people involved in the justice system each and every day is truly remarkable.

I believe this year's Probation Officers' Week theme, #wegotyou, captures the unifying belief that working together, shoulder to shoulder, we can build an even more effective probation and parole system for those who work in it and those they serve. Recognizing this week provides an opportunity to increase awareness of the important role that probation and parole officers play in monitoring and rehabilitating inmates, helping break the cycle of reoffending, and building safer communities for all.

As a result of their hard work, the overall number of offenders who reoffend has, in fact, declined in recent years—even as the overall risk levels and complexity of offenders under supervision has gone up. Again, that is due to the hard work of our probation and parole officers and the valued network of community organizations and support groups they are plugged into.

But Speaker, let me be clear: We know there is more work to do. Transforming our correctional system is a top priority for me and our government. The government needs the experience, expertise and advice of probation and parole officers to ensure our strategy is based on evidence, focused on outcomes, and truly breaks the cycle of reoffending. Together, we can develop solutions to stop the cycle of people exiting and re-entering our correctional system, and build truly safer communities.

The Probation Officers Association of Ontario will continue to play a vital role, because I know that supporting the integral work of our probation and parole

officers is central to this. That is why we added an additional 14 probation and parole program officer positions across the province last year. We are rolling out new systems to help with caseload management, and we are hiring 25 additional probation and parole officers, and working to add even more in the years to come.

This week is an opportunity for us to recognize probation and parole officers and learn more about their profession, and thank them for the challenges they take on and the excellent work they do on our behalf.

Speaker, I encourage all members to use this week to visit a local probation and parole office to say hello and to congratulate them for their tireless efforts to keep our communities safe.

On behalf of the Premier, our entire government and the people of Ontario, I want to thank Ontario's probation and parole officers for the difference they make in people's lives and in building safer communities.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES STAFF

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's a busy week in the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, with First Responders Day, corrections week, probation and parole officers' week, and emergency management week. So it's my great honour and pleasure to speak again in recognition of correctional services week.

Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, I am pleased to be joined by many of our correctional staff who have joined me in announcing that we are installing full-body X-ray scanners in all provincial correctional institutions. I want to thank them for their advocacy and their hard work.

Our government commends each and every one of our over 6,500 hard-working correctional services staff, right across the province, and recognizes the hard work and dedication they make to rehabilitating inmates, breaking the cycle of reoffending and, ultimately, building stronger and safer communities for all.

I want to recognize the member from Halton for introducing Bill 116, the Correctional Services Staff Recognition Week Act, and for her tireless advocacy on behalf of Ontario's correctional staff. Our government supports this bill and hopes it is passed as soon as possible to ensure that the first week of May will officially recognize the hard work of Ontario's correctional staff, and give us an opportunity to say thank you for the hard work, dedication and professionalism they bring to the job every single day.

But like our correctional staff, our government knows that the status quo in our correctional system cannot continue. That is why I look forward to continuing to work together, shoulder to shoulder, to transform Ontario's correctional system by increasing staffing levels, enhancing mental health training and supports, and expanding rehabilitation and reintegration programs to build safer communities for all Ontarians.

First and foremost, this means hiring many more correctional services staff. Speaker, I'm proud of the fact that we have hired 734 new correctional officers since

2013. In fact, I had the opportunity to join 12 probation and parole officers at their graduation last week in Hamilton, and 24 new correctional officers began their training yesterday as part of our Correctional Officers' Training and Assessment North initiative to hire northern Ontario residents for institutions in northern Ontario.

But, Speaker, we are not stopping there. Last month, I was pleased to be joined by members from Halton and Burlington, along with Gord Longhi and Alex Sawicki from OPSEU, to announce that our government would be hiring 2,000 more officers over the next three years and are in the process of hiring 25 new probation and parole officers.

We have hired 41 mental health nurses and worked in partnership with the Centre for Mental Health and Addictions to design enhanced mental health training that is rolling out across the province. We will ensure that these officers have all the necessary training and supports in place to safely manage our inmate population.

Every day, correctional officers across the province provide supports and services to over 8,000 inmates in our correctional facilities while keeping our institutions and our communities safe. The dedication that they show helps to rehabilitate those in their care so they can successfully re-enter the community when they have served their sentence. Their vital work makes our communities safer.

Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize the hard work and talent of our other correctional service staff, such as nurses, psychologists, administrative support workers, food services professionals and maintenance staff. They play a vital role in the rehabilitation of inmates and the safe and secure operation of our facilities.

As we honour the efforts of our corrections staff, we will continue to work with all of our partners as we move forward with a mandate to transform our correctional system through evidence-based solutions and an increased focus on mental health services and inmate programming to develop effective and lasting improvements. This is how we will finally break the cycle of reoffending.

Many think of corrections as the end point in the justice system, but corrections staff ultimately provide a new beginning for those who pass through our doors. They help people turn around their lives and provide them with opportunities to succeed. That takes time, energy, expertise, tolerance and resilience.

It is a great privilege, Speaker, for me to rise in this House today to express, on behalf of our government and the people of Ontario, our gratitude to our correctional services staff who serve us and keep our communities safe. I ask all members to give a big round of applause to the members of correctional staff who are here with us in the gallery. Thank you to them for their service.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses. The member from—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Chatham-Kent-Essex.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Chatham-Kent-Essex.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES STAFF

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Speaker. I don't always dress this way when I'm responding to a ministerial statement—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It threw me off.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: —but when I do, I'm usually then sitting in the chair.

It is my pleasure, as the PC critic for community safety and correctional services, to rise today and to deliver a response on behalf of the PC caucus and our leader, Patrick Brown.

Our correctional system faces many challenges. This has been known for several years. Yet there has simply not been enough done to address the serious issues over that time. I am pleased that correctional officers have been recognized as first responders and were included in the government's PTSD bill and will now receive support. That is something worth celebrating.

At the same time, we would like to see their brothers and sisters in the correctional family taken care of as well. Nurses, probation and parole officers, as well as bailiffs, face similar stress in their jobs, but were left out of that bill.

In corrections, there is but one rule: Everyone goes home. The nature of their work requires everyone, from correctional officers to custodial staff, to look out for each other. While correctional officers are thankful for being included in the PTSD bill, they would like to see their colleagues included as well.

I am pleased that the government has listened to my PC caucus, my leader, Patrick Brown, and myself as we advocated strongly to expand the body scanner program in Ontario's correctional centres and jails. I saw that first-hand, Speaker, when I had the opportunity of visiting the Toronto South Detention Centre last fall. This will improve the safety of inmates and COs, and I support it.

Correctional staff are perhaps the most unsung of all the heroes within the first responders family, as their work is done behind fences and thick concrete walls instead of where the public can see them, but that doesn't make their work any less valuable to their communities. They work hard to keep their communities safe and secure. Corrections staff do what they can to keep inmates safe, despite frequent overcrowding issues beyond their control. Overcrowding still remains an issue.

1530

The government has taken steps to improve the crisis in corrections, but there's still a lot of work to do, and I'm sure the minister will agree with me on that. The work to solve the crisis goes well beyond corrections week. It's through a commitment to improve working conditions day to day, through a committed, open and trusting partnership between the government and corrections, where we will start to see greater strides taken.

We in the PC caucus will be there each and every step along the way as we collectively address the crisis in corrections.

PROBATION AND PAROLE OFFICERS

Mr. Rick Nicholls: As the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services pointed out, it's a busy day for him and, therefore, it's a busy day for me as well.

The role that correctional and probation officers have in our province is, in fact, a critical one. It's a role that comes with the responsibility to protect the public from individuals who have broken the law in sometimes heinous ways, and also the responsibility to help those same individuals through the rehabilitation process as they look to turn their lives around. It's a dual role that few can be tasked with, but it is one that all rely on.

In my role as the official opposition critic for community safety and correctional services, I have been able to meet with many officers who have shared similar concerns. The most common issue that has been brought to my attention is the lack of resources to do a job that they are passionate about—doing it effectively as well as safely. Offenders are becoming more violent and more complex to supervise. Officers are being asked to look after more and more clients without being provided a safer working environment.

The minister spoke about body scanners at our detention centres, and it may be something to look into, to provide safer working conditions for our probation officers and parole officers who are sometimes faced with clients who bring in weapons and they're unaware of that. Speaker, they need to be kept safe as well, and I know you'll agree with me on that.

If the province is unwilling to give them adequate resources to do their jobs properly as they face the highest caseloads in the country, or the resources to work safely as they continue to work without the basic protections, such as metal detectors, you would think that they would offer them help when things go wrong.

Workers in many occupations face trauma at work; probation and parole officers are no different. We were very disappointed that the government left probation and parole officers, as well as bailiffs, off the list of first responders on the PTSD bill, but we will continue to call on the government to recognize these hard-working officers and give them the help they deserve.

In addition to extending PTSD coverage to probation and parole officers, the government must also offer the proper resources so that their work is less traumatic to begin with. It's not simply through a probation and parole officers' day here in the comfort of the Legislature, but day to day in the workplace, where our collective support is truly needed.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES STAFF

PROBATION AND PAROLE OFFICERS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is always my privilege to stand in the Legislature and to bring voice on important issues. Today, I'm standing as the NDP critic for community safety and correctional services. I'm very pleased to add my voice and welcome our colleagues from

corrections who are here, to recognize the work they do and to thank them very much for joining us today.

This week is being recognized as corrections week, and today is probation and parole day. We also recognized First Responders Day on May 1, so I would like to echo some of the sentiments from May 1 and First Responders Day, because our correctional workers are first responders and high-stress, front-line service providers, and I want to fully recognize and thank them.

We are safe and secure and go about our lives and go about our business. We tuck in our kids, we participate in our communities, and we make plans. We're able to do that because our first responders work day in, day out to ensure that our society is safe, protected and secure.

Our corrections workers are essential—maybe not officially; that's coming. But the work they do is, and it is important to recognize it. The impossible decisions they have to make, the violent and traumatizing realities they're faced with every day, and the truths that they know and the pain that they carry can never be measured. "Thank you" doesn't seem like a sufficient way to express our appreciation.

I'm glad to be able to comment on the corrections file. It's a massive file, incidentally. In fact, Mr. Speaker, you might remember a time when it used to be its own portfolio, before it was tucked in and wrapped in with community safety, tucked in a back corner, locked away. Only recently has this Liberal government recognized that they have the key. Finally, there is more focus on the crisis in corrections. The public is paying more attention and having a better understanding of how corrections connects to all of our public systems, not just from what they learn on Netflix or in the movies, but they're actually getting real information, which makes all the difference.

I travelled around the province and visited 15 of our jails and about a dozen of our probation and parole offices. I saw dire need. I saw deplorable conditions. I saw first-hand what government neglect looks like. But I also saw commitment. I saw professionalism and corrections workers, officers and staff who work hard in dangerous, highly stressful environments. It isn't enough to appreciate. We need to support when it comes to safety, when it comes to mental health, when it comes to training, protective equipment, staffing, and effective and appropriate policies and ministry practices.

We know there's a crisis in corrections. We've been calling on this government to address overcrowding and understaffing. I want to touch on that again. Our jails are terribly understaffed. Our probation and parole offices are struggling under immense caseloads. People living and working in our jails and working in the correctional system are asking for the same things, because basic, fundamental needs are not being met. The ministry is talking about hiring. Hiring is an important part of the story, but they need to be responsible employers and make sure that levels are appropriate. As officers retire, as they leave the job, levels have to be maintained to continue to meet the needs.

Today is probation and parole day as well. Our probation and parole officers are high-stress service providers who keep track of all of our former offender-neighbours. They do their best to keep them out of trouble in our communities, with insufficient resources.

We've talked about Bill 163 and presumptive coverage recognizing PTSD and those who have been diagnosed. We left out many of our front-line service providers. We left out our bailiffs. We left out our probation and parole officers. That needs to be fixed.

I have so many thoughts and I'm running out of time.

I will speak to the announcement today, because we need to focus on safety, fundamentally. I know that the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services would really like for me to send flowers and to thank the ministry for the body scanners. I'm not going to send flowers. However, what I will say is that since I've been elected, I actually haven't seen a process like this one, where there have been health and safety concerns for years—because metal detectors aren't enough—a pilot project, correctional officers have come to committee, letters to the minister. They've had that feedback. There have been regular reports of deaths and overdoses, slashings and stabbings. Staff and inmates are suffering the effects of a violent and unsafe workplace. For the minister to follow through on this commitment—I've actually never seen that before from this government, so I will acknowledge that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much. I wish I had more time. I have so many things to say. Thank you for all you do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements. It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Rick Nicholls: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that

protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I approve of this petition and I give it to page William.

1540

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Seeing as how today is probation and parole officers' day, I have petitions from probation and parole officers from across Ontario.

"MCSCS Probation and Parole Officers and MCYS Probation Officers.

"Supporting the Inclusion of Probation and Probation and Parole Officers in Presumptive PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) Legislation under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Bill 163 provides for WSIB benefits for a select few first responders diagnosed with PTSD; and

"Whereas MCSCS probation and parole officers and MCYS probation officers have been specifically excluded from Bill 163, despite overwhelming evidence that these front-line officers are exposed to primary trauma, secondary trauma and vicarious trauma often resulting in PTSD diagnoses; and

"Whereas the rates of assaults, threats and intimidation of corrections staff have increased by 2,750% in the period from 2009 to 2014; and

"Whereas Manitoba's Bill 35 'Workers Compensation Amendment Act' includes probation and probation and parole officers; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services has neither programs for the prevention of PTSD nor employee assistance programs (EAP) nor wellness programs that specifically support and treat those workers diagnosed with PTSD or like symptoms;

"We, the undersigned probation officers and probation and parole officers, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario shall include probation officers and probation and parole officers in presumptive PTSD legislation under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act and that the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services creates programs aimed at PTSD prevention, along with employee assistance programs and wellness programs that address the mental health needs and occupational stressors related to trauma exposure."

I wholeheartedly support this petition, affix my name and send it with Alfred.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and I know that the Chair of Cabinet will want to hear this.

"Whereas the price of electricity has skyrocketed under the Ontario Liberal government;

"Whereas ever-higher hydro bills are a huge concern for everyone in the province, especially seniors and others on fixed incomes, who can't afford to pay more;

"Whereas Ontario's businesses say high electricity costs are making them uncompetitive, and have contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs;

"Whereas the recent Auditor General's report found Ontarians overpaid for electricity by \$37 billion over the past eight years and estimates that we will overpay by an additional \$133 billion over the next 18 years if nothing changes;

"Whereas the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants costing \$1.1 billion, feed-in tariff (FIT) contracts with wind and solar companies, the sale of surplus energy to neighbouring jurisdictions at a loss, the debt retirement charge, the global adjustment and smart meters that haven't met their conservation targets have all put upward pressure on hydro bills;

"Whereas the sale of 60% of Hydro One is opposed by a majority of Ontarians and will likely only lead to even higher hydro bills;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To listen to Ontarians, reverse course on the Liberal government's current hydro policies and take immediate steps to stabilize hydro bills."

I agree with this petition and I will affix my signature to it as well.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas northern Ontario communities are connected across long distances by bus service; and

"Whereas the ONTC bus service is the only form of public transportation available to many northern Ontario residents; and

"Whereas reduction of customer service and the closure of stations will cause deterioration of the overall system of public transportation of passengers and goods in northeastern Ontario; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario committed to providing enhanced bus service to alleviate the loss of the ONTC passenger rail service;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Ontario Northland Transportation Commission bus service must be enhanced to ensure reliable and continuous accessibility including uniform provision of adequate public transportation for all communities and people of northern Ontario."

I wholeheartedly agree and would like to send it down with page Julia.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm going to paraphrase the petition. I want to thank the staff at St. Lawrence Lodge, their families and supporters.

This is a petition standing up for long-term care and in support of Bill 188. I'm pleased to affix my signature, and I'll send it to the table with page Laura.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Wayne Gates: "Hydro One Not for Sale! Say No to Privatization.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

I'll sign my name to it and give it to Grace.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current government under Premier Kathleen Wynne is calling for the sale of up to 60% of Hydro One shares into private ownership; and

"Whereas the decision to sell the public utility was made without any public input and the deal will continue to be done in complete secrecy; and

"Whereas the loss of majority ownership in Hydro One will force ratepayers to accept whatever changes the new owners decide, such as higher rates; and

"Whereas electricity rates are already sky-high and hurting family budgets as well as businesses; and

"Whereas ratepayers will never again have independent investigations of consumer complaints, such as the Ontario Ombudsman's damning report on failed billing; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario are the true owners of Hydro One and they do not believe the fire sale of Hydro One is in their best interest;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To protect Ontario ratepayers by stopping the sale of Hydro One."

I fully support this, affix my name and send it with page Preston.

AUTISM TREATMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have petitions that come from all over my riding. I'd like to thank Mr. and Mrs. Terry and Diane Sullivan for their support. It goes as follows:

"Whereas the government recently announced plans to reform the way autism services are delivered in the province...;

"Whereas in 2003, former Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty removed the previous age cap on IBI therapy, stating that Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six; and

"Whereas applied behaviour analysis (ABA) and intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) are the only recognized evidence-based practices known to treat autism spectrum disorder (ASD); and

"Whereas the combined number of children waiting for ABA and IBI therapies in Ontario is approximately 16,158; and

"Whereas wait-lists for services have become overwhelmingly long due to the chronic underfunding by this Liberal government;

"Whereas some families are being forced to re-mortgage houses or move to other provinces while other families have no option but to go without essential therapy;

"Whereas the Premier and her government should not be balancing the budget on the backs of kids with ASD and their families;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to immediately ensure that all children currently on the waiting list for IBI therapy are grandfathered into the new program so they do not become a lost generation."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it, and ask the page—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Further petitions?

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that

protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

Speaker, I support this petition. It's signed by many people—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Further petitions?

1550

PRIX DE L'ESSENCE

M. Michael Mantha: Ma pétition est sur le prix de l'essence.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Alors que les automobilistes du nord de l'Ontario continuent d'être soumis à des fluctuations marquées dans le prix de l'essence; et

« Alors que la province pourrait éliminer les prix abusifs et opportunistes et offrir des prix justes, stables et prévisibles; et

« Alors que cinq provinces et de nombreux états américains ont déjà une réglementation des prix d'essence; et

« Considérant que les juridictions qui réglementent le prix de l'essence ont : moins de fluctuations des prix, moins d'écarts de prix entre les communautés urbaines et rurales et des prix d'essence annualisés inférieurs;

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« D'accorder à la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario le mandat de surveiller le prix de l'essence partout en Ontario afin de réduire la volatilité des prix et les différences de prix régionales, tout en encourageant la concurrence. »

Je suis complètement d'accord avec cette pétition, monsieur le Président. J'y affixe ma signature, et je la donne à Aadil pour l'apporter à la table des greffiers.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the purpose of Ontario's Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is to 'provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.' RSO 1990, c. E.19, s. 3.; and

"Whereas 'all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.'—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature to this, as I agree with this petition, and I thank you very much for the time to present it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over the northeast. I'd like to thank Stewart and Marilynn McBain from Lively, in my riding.

"Nurses Know—A Petition for Better Care....

"Whereas providing high-quality, universal public health care is crucial for a fair and thriving Ontario; and

"Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to registered nurses (RNs) and hurt patient care; and

"Whereas, in 2015 alone, Ontario has lost more than 1.5 million hours of RN care due to cuts; and

"Whereas procedures are being off-loaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and

"Whereas funded services are being cut from hospitals and are not being provided in the community; and

"Whereas cutting skilled care means patients suffer more complications, readmissions and death;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

"Commit to restoring hospital base operating funding to at least cover the costs of inflation and population growth;

"Create a fully-funded multi-year health human resources plan to bring Ontario's ratio of registered nurses to population up to the national average; and

"Ensure hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality, integrated care for clinical procedures and stop plans for moving such procedures into private, unaccountable clinics."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Further petitions?

AUTOMOTIVE DEALERS

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm going to paraphrase this petition again. I want to thank Metro Orleans Dodge Chrysler Jeep Ram for their support of my Bill 152 and their support of this petition.

I'm going to send it to the table with page Aadil. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. The time for petitions has now expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ALTERNATIVE FINANCIAL SERVICES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS CONCERNANT LES SERVICES FINANCIERS DE RECHANGE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 20, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 156, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to financial services / Projet de loi 156, Loi modifiant diverses lois concernant les services financiers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It is my pleasure to speak on this bill today. I'll be sharing my time with the Associate Minister of Health, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, and the member from Halton.

I want to start by talking about the change that has happened in Ontario. Ontario has changed, Canada has changed and North America has changed in many different ways. When my father first came to Canada, I remember going to the bank with him. He would have the book, and he would go to the bank probably once every two weeks. That was his interaction with the financial institution. If you look at today, so many things have changed. The environment has changed. I'm constantly on my mobile device, moving money around and doing things like paying bills. I would say that the financial exposure we have of moving things around and doing things is a lot more complicated than back in the mid-1970s when my father first—

Hon. James J. Bradley: I still go to the bank.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Minister Bradley still goes to the bank, which is a great thing, and many Ontarians do, but we know there are many other alternatives. Besides credit cards and cash, now you hear of things like bitcoin. So the world has changed, and with that change have come a lot of alternative methods to receive money and cash your cheques.

We know that we need to change with the times, and we've seen a big shift happen in Ontario, mostly around payday institutions. Back in the mid-1990s there was a handful of them in Ontario. Now, if you look right across the country, there are hundreds. I believe that around 600 exist right across the country, and if you look throughout North America, they're everywhere. In fact, Mr. Speaker, when I'm driving in Toronto I'm always shocked to see all these different payday advance places pop up in different parts of Toronto.

I always notice that when you look at these places you see words like "fast" and "rapid" and "easy." It's almost like the money is free. The signs are big and bright, and the branding is beautiful. It just kind of draws you in. In fact, Mr. Speaker, yesterday was the first time in my life that I went into a Money Mart—the first time I could ever remember in my life.

The reason I had to go into one was that I had to send money to someone using Western Union. In fact, that person's bank card wasn't working in the country they're in. I decided to go into the Western Union, and I had to actually send money. I only sent around \$250, and I was shocked because it cost me almost \$20 to send \$250. I know that if I did that with an e-transfer, if their card was working, it would have cost me a dollar or two.

So there is a lot of change happening in Ontario and in Canada when it comes to financial institutions. This

proposed legislation, Bill 156, the Alternative Financial Services Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015, amends three existing laws: the Collection and Debt Settlement Services Act, the Consumer Protection Act and the Payday Loans Act.

I'm really interested in these proposed changes, because I know there are many communities out there that find these types of financial institutions in their neighbourhood—we've seen banks move around, and sometimes they're not in neighbourhoods where people live. These types of institutions affect some professionals, but mostly people who may have some financial literacy challenges. In some cases, they can target certain neighbourhoods; they can target certain people. I think it's our job, as elected officials, to make sure we put in place the safeguards that will protect people.

Mr. Speaker, could you imagine borrowing money and paying almost 600% annualized, over the course of a year? To me, it's astonishing. When we look at small loans that you or I or many members of the Legislature or people in Ontario could go out and actually capture—can actually go out and get loans—they're paying 3% to 5% on a personal loan and maybe 6% or 7% on a credit card; mortgages are at an all-time low at 2% or 3%. A credit card, which is considered the most extreme form of credit in some cases, is 20% or 21% at the higher end. I was reading a little earlier today that if you go and pawn something, it's capped at 60%. But here we are in Ontario and Canada, where you look across the country and it is up to 600% that these payday loan operations can charge. To me, that is unacceptable, and we need to make some changes.

1600

That's why we're proposing this piece of legislation to make those changes. I know that it will give, if passed, the minister the ability to use regulation to put caps in place. There's going to be a public consultation that will take place in order to figure out what the right type of number is.

I've also noticed that we're not the only jurisdiction that's thinking about changes. I know that, in Alberta, there have been some changes. I know that there have been discussions even in municipalities here in Ontario. Ottawa currently has a discussion taking place on the licensing of these types of financial institutions. So it's not only a conversation that's taking place in Ontario; it's a conversation that's taking place throughout Canada and also in our local municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, it's our job to make sure that rules are put in place and that there's a fair sense of equity when it comes to financial services here in Ontario. A piece that we need to constantly focus on—I'm from the literacy sector. That's where I came from. I was the CEO and executive director of a literacy organization here in Ontario that specialized in digital literacy. I know that, working within that literacy sector, financial literacy was a key piece to literacy here in Ontario. We need to make sure that we continue to move in the right direction, that we invest in literacy and we invest in making sure that

the right type of legislation is there and that the right type of regulation is there.

I'm so happy to speak on this piece of legislation. I will now stop so my colleagues can comment on this piece of proposed legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Halton.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I want to thank the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport for his great comments.

I am pleased to rise today and speak to Bill 156, the Alternative Financial Services Statute Law Amendment Act. The proposed amendments are important steps that need to be taken to protect Ontario consumers and make sure that they understand their rights.

More often than not, it is Ontario's most vulnerable or low-income residents who use alternative financial services like payday loans and rent-to-own companies. It is up to us to make sure they are protected.

Across the province, there are more than 800 so-called fast-cash outlets, and their services are even available online. You know the ones, Mr. Speaker: the ones with the flashing neon signs that my colleague earlier mentioned; the ones that say "cash now" or "fast."

Our government knows that we need to monitor this industry and make sure people aren't being taken advantage of. Why? Because people have expressed concerns. The high-interest loans and arrangements are often more than people can manage. So, after a lot of public consultation, we are proposing amendments that would put new rules and restrictions on payday lenders, rent-to-own outlets and collection agencies that buy debts and collect the money.

When it comes to payday loans, we wanted to restrict high-frequency borrowing, which is why customers would now have to wait seven days between payday loans. Mr. Speaker, we know that high-frequency borrowing can sometimes result in financial disaster for some borrowers. These limits would give people more time to consider their options. Those who borrow repeatedly would have a longer repayment period in certain circumstances. This is about giving people a chance to repay their loans.

Some may wonder why we don't ban payday loans entirely, but our government has met with numerous consumer service agencies and they have specifically told us not to. Instead, these knowledgeable groups advised us that it is preferable to have a safe payday loan than no small-dollar credit at all, and that's exactly what we're doing with these amendments: making a safe payday loan system.

The changes we're proposing for rent-to-own services include giving consumers a grace period for late payment and a right to reinstate the agreement under certain circumstances. Consumers with debts in collections would benefit from rules that apply more broadly. This would include expanding the definition of a collection agency to include people who purchase debts in arrears and then collect them. That's very important.

Changes under the Consumer Protection Act would mean that cheque-cashing outlets that fall under the alternative financial services category would now have to disclose more information to consumers so that they know what they're getting into. It would also give authority to cap the fees for cashing government-issued cheques, a very important step.

Our government knows that alternative financial services can often be directed at low-income consumers or people who are in financially vulnerable situations. Ultimately, it can just push people further and further into debt, and we want to avoid that.

We are committed to protecting consumers, and that includes preventing Ontarians from getting caught in a cycle of debt. This can mean financial ruin for so many people. By introducing these amendments, we can help to make sure that consumers using these services are aware of the costs, their options and their rights. We want to be sure we're creating a fair and balanced marketplace for all Ontario consumers.

Mr. Speaker, it is our aim to pass these amendments and have new regulations in place by 2017. I hope my colleagues in the Legislature will put their support behind Bill 156 and help to make sure that Ontario consumers are protected and safe.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'm also pleased to join my colleagues the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport and MPP Harris in speaking in favour of Bill 156, alternative financial services, which is really a fancy way of saying "payday loans."

The reason we are moving forward to further regulate this industry is quite simple: This is an industry that is often used by vulnerable people. I believe that, as elected representatives, our first duty is to those who are the most vulnerable.

So I'm really pleased that we are moving forward with some of these changes. Essentially, what they're doing is—the sum of the changes is, first, to ensure that the person who is providing this credit is not taking undue advantage of the borrowers, who are often desperate. They're desperate to cash that cheque to pay for their rent, to make that payment on the credit card. These are people who are typically in very difficult financial situations. They're under a lot of stress, and they are not in a strong negotiating position. So they will often go to these places, and they will pay whatever price is being asked of them for that loan, for that short-term loan. One of the ways, I think, to protect them is to put some limits on the terms by which money can be lent to them.

The second thing that this bill moves to do—and I think this is really critical—is around the idea of putting some responsibility on the lender in terms of who you lend to. One of the most interesting things, Mr. Speaker—and I think all of us probably have experienced this—is the fact that often, when I go and pick up my mail, like most of you—and I hardly ever get any

personal mail. It's always bills, a lot of bills, and some I guess what we call flyers or junk mail, and a lot of letters from banks offering me credit cards.

We live in a world where credit is easily available, without any limitations. I, of course, like many of you, just tear it up right away. I take that credit card that comes in the mail—I never even applied for it and it shows up. Like many of you, I just cut it up and throw it away. But when you are in really difficult financial situations, you end up using that very high-cost credit.

So the fact is that at least in the payday loan industry, we are moving forward to put some limitation and actually saying, "Listen, if this person is a repeat borrower, what are the checks and balances? What can we do to protect this person?" I really like that part of the bill as well. Actually, I want to go back to here: "Require payday lenders to take into account certain factors about a borrower before entering into a payday loan agreement, restrict high-frequency borrowing ... and improve payday loan borrower awareness of credit counselling services."

1610

That's the other piece that is really powerful about this bill. I think we can all agree that education is perhaps one of the biggest ways we can help people in any area, and that includes credit counselling.

Often, when you're under that kind of stress, you don't have access to credit counselling that is in your best interests. Yes, there are people who will say, "We'll consolidate your loan"—I was reading an article recently, I think in the *Toronto Star*, about this company that offered to help people who are in difficult situations by consolidating their loans, only for the poor customer to find out that you end up paying even more to the person who apparently was trying to help you. To be able to have access to credible credit counselling services is also key.

The issue of, "Why don't you just ban it? Why don't you just throw the baby out with the bathwater?" I can tell you we did talk about it. The reason we decided not to ban it and instead to further regulate it is the fact that this industry exists because there's a need for it. If we were to ban it, all we would do is push it underground. Having to choose between banning something and just pushing it underground, which would make it even more unregulated, we decided to take the judicious approach, the middle-of-the-path approach, which was, "We know there's a need. We know that this need is being fulfilled by these payday loans or alternative financial services. What can we do to further regulate it?" That's the spirit in which this bill is being brought forward.

Often I find we have heated debates in the Legislature on proposals brought forward by the government, but I really hope that in this one case, we can all agree that the best way forward truly is not to ban this—because by banning it, all we would do is drive it underground, and the people who really, really are desperate for that liquidity would be denied that and then they would go in the underground or black market. Instead, how do we regulate it to find that balance between putting some

more restrictions on the lender—but not so much that the business becomes untenable, because this is a service that people need—and that focus on education that would really, really help the industry and, in particular, those who are vulnerable?

I think I only had four minutes. I don't know, am I supposed to go right to the end?

Interjection.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Okay, I'm just going to sit down because I think I only was supposed to speak for four minutes. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'll try to use up the last little minute and a bit. I want to thank my colleague the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care for her very thoughtful intervention.

This is an interesting dynamic relating to poverty, because people with very little financial capacity and low wages find themselves forced into living from paycheque to paycheque and hand to mouth. This is, sadly, an expensive bridging solution. While I'm very supportive of the bill, and it's an important next step, I'm hoping that our government doesn't stop here. I think some of the user interest rates that people who are of very modest means or who are struggling, even after they get their first job and are back in the economy after they were pushed out of the economy, as so many people were in the horrible recession of 2008—these are the kinds of financial institutions and constructs that people perceive.

I would much rather that one day, we start to deal with the issue of very high interest rates, whether it's on credit cards or payday loans, because the level of return—when people are paying over 20% on money, you end up with all of your attempts to pay back being consumed. When you go to credit agencies for help, a lot of my constituents find that's just another trap. Very smart, fast-talking people get you to sign papers that make it sound like you're getting relief, but in fact, you've bought on to a whole other set of problems.

I'm very pleased that this is moving forward, but I hope that this is the beginning of actions by this Legislature.

I noticed some of the members opposite have raised these issues before, but I think this is an area in which all parties should be doing more. I hope that this will be the start of greater action on this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to comment on the—I was going to say "the speech from the individual from the other side," but there were four individuals who took part in that debate on the government side: the Minister of the Environment, the Associate Minister of Health, the member for Halton and the Minister of Culture and Sport. So there was a 20-minute tag-team, divvied up four ways.

I want to point out one thing to the Minister of the Environment. We'd all like to live in a world where this kind of access to money wasn't necessary, we'd all like to have everybody never run into financial problems, but the reality is quite different. When the minister talks about this being something where people who are in poverty run to those places, that's not quite the case. I used to think that myself, but we find that it might be people who actually work in this precinct; it could be people who are working in the broader public sector. They run into an unforeseen circumstance. I used to think that we should have gotten rid of these places, but then I got a little more educated about what actually happens.

People run into an unforeseen circumstance—it's unexpected. Somebody gets ill in the family, whatever, and then they get a hydro bill on which they have run behind. Then they have to make a choice between having the hydro cut off, which is going to cost more to get it reconnected, and running in for a quick loan, paying a higher service fee, but continuing with the hydro connection. They've actually saved more money than if they'd had the hydro shut off and had to pay a reconnection fee.

There are all kinds of different circumstances that creep up when somebody is dealing with a payday loan service. It's not simply the poor. It's a lot of people who have regular jobs that are running these services. That's why there are so many of them around. You can't go down the street two blocks without running into a payday loan service.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise to offer some thoughts on the remarks that were given to us by the Liberal members across the way about Bill 156, the Alternative Financial Services Statute Law Amendment Act.

My community is a community that has followed this issue closely. In fact, the United Way London and Middlesex conducted a very comprehensive study on payday lending in the city—who was accessing these services and what the implications were of having this flourishing payday loan industry. One of the members of the United Way London and Middlesex sat on the expert panel that contributed to the legislation that we have before us today.

Now, these issues are not new. They have been around for years. The government started the process back in 2013 of trying to impose some regulation and some protection for vulnerable people with legislation, and it has taken far too long to reach the point that we are at today. Of course, the bill that we see before us, like so many other pieces of legislation that are brought forward by the Liberals, contains very little detail. Much of the detail—much of the actual protections that will benefit consumers and those who have to access these predatory lenders—is going to be included in the regulations, not in the legislation itself.

Certainly, we need these kinds of protections. Vulnerable people who are taken advantage of by predatory

lenders need some real government action to protect their interests, but this bill needs a lot of work before it's going to do that effectively.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm pleased to be able to have an opportunity to say a few words. I think it's a reflection of how important this legislation is that four members of our government caucus spoke about this piece of legislation. If anything, I share the feelings expressed by the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, that I hope that this is the beginning of us going even further in terms of trying to protect vulnerable people.

The member opposite is quite right: This process began back in 2013, focused on reviewing payday loan legislation. That review was expanded, I think for all the right reasons, to include other types of high-cost alternative financial services, such as installment loans, cheque cashing and rent-to-own services, as well as debt collection.

1620

I think that, like everybody else, I'm certainly conscious of the fact that in each and every one of our communities, there are a number of these establishments that are there and that are to some degree meeting a need, but at the same time, I think, obviously putting people in very difficult positions in terms of what their actual rights are. That's why I think this legislation is important.

This proposed bill will protect consumers, there's no doubt, in several important ways. Consumers with debts in collections would benefit from debt collection rules that apply more broadly, including applying to debt purchasers. Consumers cashing government cheques at alternative financial service providers would have more information and may benefit from a cap on the rate of cheque cashing services.

I think one of the things that I'm keen on seeing, too, is that perhaps there will be limits governing what advertising signs can say, when they can say it, how big they can be and things like that. The bottom line, I think, is that this is important legislation. Certainly, I support it. Again, I think it's important to note that many members of our government were up here to speak about it because they care so much as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise and have just a few moments to speak to the comments made by the four members of the government side on Bill 156. First of all, it's not very often that four people share one time slot. I quickly grabbed the bill to have a look at it because I thought, "This must be a massive bill and it must make massive changes to the payday loan situation in the province of Ontario." But there really isn't much in this bill that's going to impact or help the situation.

I think we all have to realize that what's causing the need for the payday loan—and there is a need, obviously. That's why there are more today than there used to be.

It's because it's becoming more and more expensive to live in the province of Ontario. There's usually a lot of the week left at the end of the paycheque and people have to find ways to pay their bills. I think it was mentioned by one of the other comments that when the hydro bill needs to be paid, the cost and the penalty for being two days late—just because it isn't payday yet—is far greater than what they have to pay at the payday loan to borrow that money for that time. So there is a need for this type of establishment.

At the same time, the government in their comments, as they were talking about this bill, didn't talk about the real challenge there: Why there is such a growth in the need for having this emergency money available for the people of Ontario. Of course, it is because it's more and more expensive every day to live in this province. The cost of hydro is now more than it was for hydro and food for that same period of time. I can go to the grocery store and get enough groceries for a whole month to feed the family. Then I get the hydro bill and, in fact, it's higher than it is for all the food of that month. That's why it's getting more and more expensive to live.

We have more and more people who need this service, and this bill doesn't help that. It doesn't reduce the cost of living in this province; it just gives them this opportunity to have a few more days to pay their bills. I think that they should be fixing the problem and not stopping—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Back to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change for final comments.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I appreciate the member for Oxford's comments. I'd just like to point out a few things. One, the inflation rate has been about as low as it possibly ever has been, historically, for one of the longest periods of time. We're in an economy now where we've gained over 600,000 jobs, the majority of them at or above the median income. We actually have 8,000 fewer part-time jobs. Maybe that's why we keep on getting elected.

The other piece of this is that there are real structural problems in the economy. There are a number of more marginal people who are working multiple jobs and who have lower skills. Many of those part-time jobs are not being produced and the higher-paying, full-time jobs are harder to access, which is why we did things like free tuition for middle- and low-income people. There's a skills gap. But there are very interesting studies that have come out recently on how much better the middle class is doing in Canada compared to the US. It's an actual issue in the US election, Mr. Speaker.

That being said, this is an option of last resort. We're a government committed to putting better financial models out there, but for people who do find themselves in circumstances—whether it's their hydro bill or whether it's their Rogers cable or any of the things we have to pay—let's make sure we have a better solution than this. But this is an important protection for people who have to access those kinds of things.

The other thing I always find interesting—the member for, I think, London West said, “Why didn't we get around to doing this?” Well, the entire legislative committee structure of this assembly right now is loaded up with major bills on the environment, the economy, waste, health, mental health and well-being—I could give you a list of a hundred other things that we could be doing, but if you can find room at committee, given the legislative load, I would love to find that space.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned, unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

I recognize the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Michael Coteau: We wish to continue debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 156, the Payday Loans Act.

I'd like to pay tribute to Jason Wang in my colleague Laurie Scott's office. He has helped prepare some of my remarks for today, and I'd like to thank him for assisting me as he has.

My colleague Jim McDonell, the MPP from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, is our critic for consumer and government services, and he did a great leadoff on this bill.

Payday lending is an important issue across this province and in my riding as well, as in many of our ridings across the province. It is a last resort for consumers who have had bad credit or no credit and who all of a sudden face an unexpected expense or an unexpected drop in income. For so many ratepayers in my riding, including seniors on fixed incomes or small businesses who struggle to keep up with the rate increases to their hydro bills, they may have to resort to a payday loan. There are so many people who resort to using food banks—more and more, Mr. Speaker. It's heartbreaking. Just when households and families think they've balanced their budgets for the month, they get the bill for their power usage and find out that electricity's on-peak period has spiked or, just on May 1, another rate increase to their hydro bill. Even when they've conserved power, regardless of whether it has been a warmer-than-average winter, they're penalized. So they're penalized if they save, and they're penalized if they pay. Something's wrong with our energy sector.

I digress, because we are debating Bill 156. But what I'm trying to say in this Legislature, so often, is that energy poverty is a serious issue and, regrettably, more and more people are in need of an extra loan. We're seeing more and more payday loan facilities needed because of the way this government is running our province. Have we really come to a point where people have to choose between paying their bills and putting

food on the table? Sadly, it is, Mr. Speaker. How can we possibly make people have to make such an impossible choice? People cannot pay their bills, and if they're lucky enough to have a job, despite the rampant unemployment, they have to deal with rising energy bills and the cost of living, because everything under this government is becoming more and more unaffordable. People sometimes need a short-term loan. Payday lending is not meant to be a regular source of funding, but for those who do use it, we have to make sure that there's continued access to this type of service, including the cashing of cheques.

Bill 156 will allow the government to regulate the total fee charge for cashing a government cheque and mandate that the information be displayed where such service is offered. Regulated payday lending locations where cheque cashing is offered already provide consumers with ample information regarding the fee that they will be charged. The net result of the disclosure provision in the bill will likely be minimal.

In fact, there was a report from the Royal Bank of Canada that said branches in Toronto would cash an Ontario Works cheque free of charge. This is the kind of partnership that the government should be promoting with the private sector across the province in order to give recipients of government cheques more options to keep all of their money, rather than seeing it chewed up by fees.

Cashing a government of Canada cheque is already free of charge at any Canadian financial institution, regardless of whether the client has an account at the institution or not. However, in the 2006 Financial Consumer Agency of Canada survey, it said that only 22% of respondents even knew about this. The payday lending industry strives to work with the government to create a set of consistent and fair rules that protect consumers and allow the industry to thrive.

My colleague Laurie Scott, from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, recalls a meeting she had with her local credit union that covers quite a large part of eastern Ontario. Kawartha Credit Union serves 50,000 members through 25 branches, including seven where they're the only financial institution in these small rural communities like Kinmount and Little Britain. Many of us in rural Ontario have the exact same thing, where there is only one institution of a financial nature in our small town.

It is not only an important source of jobs, but the functions served are often rare to find in rural communities. I find that this government does not always consider the needs of rural and northern Ontario residents. This isn't to say they're completely neglected, although sometimes it certainly feels that way. But these bills, which are "consulted" with the public, are just not comprehensive or thorough.

1630

When we see this bill that proposes to do several things, like prohibiting lenders from opening another loan within a certain time of the last loan's repayment, or

allowing the minister to regulate payday lenders by capping the amount of money that can be borrowed, I think the government overlooks the financial limitations of so many people. It reflects just how out of touch they are with so many people.

By introducing a mandatory extended payment period, the government is doing things wrong. The government is allowing a distressed borrower with clear, unresolved financial challenges to extend their payment period without providing any assurances that this particular course of action will make their financial situation any better. The government is increasing the chances of the loan never being repaid, as the borrower is likely to need another payday loan from another lender while the other is being repaid.

Not everyone can find stable work or be in good standing to borrow money from their bank, even when it's just a temporary crunch. This bill is simply about micromanaging the industry. For those who are fortunate enough to have full-time work, having credit—or rather, good credit—is an easy task. Most can prove a steady and reliable stream of income and solid payment history. But as I said before, this is not the case for every Ontarian. For new Canadians or those who have hit a bad string of luck, or had to suffer through hydro rate increases or missed payments, or experienced some negative credit circumstances, it is far more difficult to access extra funds.

Rather than overhaul the Payday Loans Act, the Collection and Debt Settlement Services Act and the Consumer Protection Act, the government should fix the fundamentals. The government should be looking at improving financial literacy among the consumer population. Consumers who frequently resort to payday loans should receive credit counselling. As our PC leader, Patrick Brown, has said, we should look at ways of improving reading, writing and arithmetic for our children—financial literacy, such as managing a credit card or filing income taxes or just understanding the basics of how to budget. Frankly, and I don't say this to be smart, I think this Liberal government has something to learn about balancing budgets, seeing as they have doubled Ontario's debt during their time in power.

Most of our kids are going to need debt counselling because of the way this government is modeling how they continue to overspend and run roughshod with our finances in the province of Ontario. They have doubled our debt. We're going to soon face \$300 billion in debt, Mr. Speaker, and as you are well aware, even this year we're going to spend \$11.4 billion on interest payments at the lowest historical interest rates we've ever had in our province. That means \$11.4 billion not going to things like health care, not going to things like education or to those on social services who need a hand up.

My colleague Steve Clark, the MPP from Leeds-Grenville, said something quite poignant the other day, which is that the government chooses to legislate before they choose to educate. This bill is trying to micro-manage the sector. Reducing consumers' access to legal

ways to a temporary loan without providing them with a clear path to financial sustainability will likely push them to the illegal loan market, and we all know that loan-sharking and those seedy practices are far more dangerous.

Limiting access to payday loans does not solve the underlying problem. I'm sure this government can understand and appreciate what it is like to need a temporary cash injection. In fact, their sell-off of Hydro One is costing our province hundreds of millions in lost revenue and reaping billions, supposedly, for infrastructure. If they had a balanced budget, I trust they might not be going out to sell an asset such as Hydro One, especially when 85% of Ontarians are telling them it's the wrong decision.

But we all know it is a financing decision that this government chose to sell off a public asset, and with the sell-off comes a degree of flexibility in how the funds are being used. On top of that, the syndicate that profited from the sales is the same group that held a fundraising reception for the Liberal Party at \$165,000. Talk about a double dip for this administration.

As my colleague from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, Jim McDonnell, has said, "Payday lending is the safety valve that stands between people's legitimate need for cash and money management advice, and the unregulated, unscrupulous and unreliable underground debt market." This bill is bad legislation. It absolutely refuses to tackle the cause of Ontarians' financial distress while at the same time trying to pick out chicken bones in a bowl of soup.

The government is equating payday loans with the problem. Resorting to payday lending is a symptom of an underlying financial condition. Whether it is due to the issues that I mentioned earlier or others, we should look at why people's budgets are being stretched. No one, even on that side of the House, can refute that it's more costly for every Ontarian in Ontario today.

Most payday lenders will meet customers' trust by offering extended payment periods when the customer indicates his or her economic situation is difficult. In those cases, the lender is happy to extend the payment deadline because they're confident that the customer can meet the obligation.

What the government is doing is creating a mandatory offer of a longer repayment period without any guarantees that the borrower can actually meet repayments. The end result could well be an increase in loan defaults and, therefore, a higher cost for everyone, including conscientious borrowers. If only the government would be conscientious about its borrowing, then we wouldn't be billions of dollars in the red, taking money away from the services that we need.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to repeat again: This year, we'll be spending \$11.4 billion in interest—\$11.4 billion that is not going to our much-needed health care, education and community social support services programs, among the other multitudes across here. That \$11.4 billion is more than we actually spend on the whole sector of community and social services.

This government is certainly faced with the repercussions of its poor fiscal management. The government is borrowing to no end, with no real, tangible plan to balance the budget except cutting services and selling Hydro One. Mr. Speaker, what happens next year after they've sold Hydro One? The Financial Accountability Officer has already stated that at the end of the day, this is not going to sustain them for the long term, that they will again have challenges balancing the budget after this one-time cash infusion of selling an asset that produces \$750 million in net revenue every single year.

People are hurting, and this government just doesn't get it. Now the government will no longer provide intensive behavioural intervention therapy to children with autism aged five and older. More than 2,000 children with autism will no longer be eligible for this treatment, and families are scared and worried.

It's interesting, when we stand here in question period and we ask those questions, that the government doesn't really come up with an answer of why they're cutting something like autism services. They take no responsibility for their fiscal mismanagement and their overspending. They've had record revenues through their taxation.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: The deputy House leader likes to heckle on some of these points, but I think he's actually feeling bad. I know he's been here a long time. He's been through the cycle, but he's feeling bad—

Hon. James J. Bradley: A point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): A point of order.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The speaker is bringing in information that has absolutely nothing to do with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I have been listening closely. I will just remind the member to, in fact, ensure that his points are focused on the bill as well. Thank you very much.

Mr. Bill Walker: I must have touched a nerve, perhaps, with the deputy House leader, who has been here so many years and understands how this place works. I'm trying to ensure that the people who are listening or are going to read this later understand why we need more payday loan services.

Sadly, it's because the cost of everything under their leadership is getting more expensive. Hydro costs are one of those. We talk almost ad nauseam every day to try to get them to listen to the costs that they have incurred. They're overspending. Their debt levels are astronomical, and that is impacting people.

That means the everyday Jane and Joe out there need other access to cash. They can't pay their bills. They're not the luxury of the people that they're trying to purport that they represent, who have the ability to pay off everything every day.

There are a lot of people, as I said earlier in my comments, who have a very short-term cash crunch. They need a service like this to be able to get through. Sadly, a lot of it is because of the increased costs of everything:

more taxes under this government; more hydro cost—we just had a rate increase again on May 1. I am, I believe, speaking to the bill and why we need payday loan facilities and services out there.

Again, I go back to how private IBI treatment is estimated to cost \$50,000 per year. The government is washing its hands: “Sorry, we don’t have enough money. We’re going to start cutting”—because of their fiscal mismanagement and their ability to not budget and get access to credit, they’re now cutting those very vital services at the front line.

Kids are losing out on services because of the fiscal mismanagement of this government. At the end of the day, they can talk all they want about how much more money they’re putting in. They’ve had record revenues and they still are overextending themselves: \$11.4 billion this year we’re going to pay in interest payments because of their lack of ability to balance the budget, and yet they’re trying to tell people out in the world how they should manage their finances and cut off access to short-term lending when they are the root of the problem.

1640

Let me be clear: The alternative financial services industry is in constant evolution, as there is an infinite way to count the same amount of money. This government is getting very good at it. Sometimes emergencies happen, and I’m sure we all know what it feels like to be stretched thin to different degrees.

I’ve seen reports across this continent that the typical payday lending customer is predominantly female, aged 25 to 44. My colleague Laurie Scott has talked about the importance of gender parity and advancing women’s rights. But why are so many users of payday female? That’s an ugly truth that the government has chosen to ignore.

So many people live paycheque to paycheque, and even then sometimes they have to deal with mounting costs like hydro, which I have said time and time again is just out of control. Consumers are expected to pay more and more because of the scandal, the waste, and the mismanagement of the 13-year tenure of this government. At the end of the day, we’re faced with things like this legislation among the added costs that we continue to bear on the front lines.

Every day, I get people through my office, pleading with me to help them. “How do I pay my hydro bill? How do I make sure I get the services? How do I get my son or daughter to have that autism treatment?” It’s very challenging to say that there isn’t a lot of money in the cupboard. They are spending and overspending as a systematic way of doing their budget.

Sometimes, Ontarians need to go on payment plans and change their payment plans. If consumers do not have a conventional financial product that suits their needs and they’re resorting to payday lending, is that not a reflection of the structures that have been put in place because of government policies? Currently, the payday lending industry is regulated through a maximum fee on a loan of no more than \$21 per \$100 borrowed. Although

the fee would translate into a very high annual interest rate if a regular loan had the same terms, a payday loan is for a maximum of two weeks and the interest is never compounded. Ten per cent of payday loans have to be written off, which is a far higher proportion than regular credit-backed lending by banks.

There is no credit check prior to receiving a payday loan. The only documentation needed is ID and recent pay stubs. This is in contrast to regular credit, where the decision to lend money and the rate at which it is lent depend on credit history. But as I mentioned earlier, not everyone is in an economic situation where they can have a solid credit history. They’re in a crunch. There’s an unexpected emergency, or, God forbid, they’ve actually got another hydro bill that they weren’t expecting to double or triple—very hard to budget.

While banks are federally regulated and credit unions may choose that option under new federal rules, the Ontario government can still facilitate more Ontarians’ access to conventional finance by promoting bank account ownership and direct deposit.

I do hope that the minister will be careful in drafting regulations under the fee cap provision. Whichever amount the ministry chooses as the fee cap, it must be significantly high enough to cover the inevitable losses from falsified cheques. If it doesn’t, we will experience what Quebec went through with payday loans: cheque-cashing services will vanish without there being any conventional financial service alternative available. Where will people turn?

While there are many aspects to this bill, I do want to also touch on the amendments to the Collection and Debt Settlement Services Act. The bill proposes to abolish the requirements for debt collectors to be registered under the act. It will also establish a framework for imposing administrative penalties on collectors not exceeding \$10,000. Collections are where a company sells bad debt to a collector for pennies on the dollar and then they must recover those debts from the consumer. While there are currently legislatively coded restrictions on collectors and their practices, consumers are subject to high levels of stress. They often do not have the funds available to them and could potentially face the stigma of their debt situation becoming known.

That is why I’m concerned that the government is proposing to remove the requirements for individual collectors to be registered with the ministry. Collectors must be registered, and any changes to their employment status with an agency must be notified to the registrar. No one can collect money in Ontario without that registration, and the registrar may deny an individual or agency registration based on that previous conduct. I don’t believe it is in the best interests of Ontarians to take out the provisions that will not allow any individual to carry out the business of collecting debts without first being registered in Ontario.

As I wrap up my debate on this bill, I want to point out that the government has a public consultation process going on right now. They even had the gall to do a press

release and say they wanted input on how much borrowers should pay for a payday loan in this province. Here's the catch—the bill is in second reading. It has already been drafted. Sounds like the budget. We went out and did consultations and yet, a mere few weeks after we were presented with a budget in the House, they didn't even have the committee meet to go over all the feedback that they supposedly had gone out and truly wanted to be accountable and transparent in their collection.

Would this public input not have been more useful prior to the bill's drafting? Now if the government does receive viable suggestions outside the scope of the bill, it is just too late. "Too bad," the government basically says. "We know best." The feedback will be open until May, but it seems asinine at this point.

The government's press release ends by saying, "Protecting Ontario's consumers is part of the government's economic plan to build Ontario up and deliver on its number one priority to grow the economy and create jobs."

In the 13 years this government has been in power, I have not seen that; in fact, quite the opposite. We've got to the point where people have become systemically dependent on social support services and financial assistance from paydays, and use food banks because life has become so expensive during this government's time in power. The government should be creating conditions for growth and prosperity, not taxing Ontarians to death and then some.

Specifically on the issue of this bill, we should look at addressing poor access to conventional credit, an issue that is so important for rural communities like Ontario's north.

I'll summarize by saying it's harder and harder for the average Ontarian to pay their bills, particularly their hydro bills. We need services like this for those people in short-term crunches who don't have the ability to get conventional credit services.

We need to ensure—particularly when this government will not listen and change tack on how they're running our finances—that those people can actually access services when they need them, on their terms.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was very interesting to listen to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound basically share some of the struggles that the people of his riding are facing. I can tell you that there are the same struggles in my riding of Nickel Belt and, I would say, throughout the northeast.

We just came back from a week of constituency work, where I hope we all took the opportunity to connect with people from our riding. I will tell you that the casework in Nickel Belt has always been heavy, but right now, it is beyond heavy.

What do we see most? We see people who managed their money all their lives and then found themselves not able to make ends meet. Those are not people who have

blown up their credit cards or gone and done things to put themselves in debt; they are people who stay home, go to work, pay their bills on time and raise their families. Now, they are falling further and further behind, very much along the lines of what the member had to say.

Do some of them turn to payday loan places? Unfortunately, they do. Right now, I will tell you that in Nickel Belt and in Sudbury, some of those are unbelievable. Start doing business with one of those payday loan places, and you will be paying them forever and ever, amen. There's always an extra fee, there's always extra money you have to have to be able to get out of there.

So it needs to be regulated, but it needs to be regulated in a way that protects the consumer. Unfortunately, there are more and more people in Ontario who cannot afford to make ends meet, and that's really shameful.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member must not have had time, because he was wandering all over other topics, to talk about the specifics of this bill and the fact that "consumers with debt in collections would benefit from debt collection rules that apply more broadly, including applying them to debt purchasers. Consumers cashing government cheques at alternative financial service providers would have more information and may benefit from a cap on the rate of cheque-cashing services." He didn't mention that "consumers using rent-to-own services would benefit from a grace period for late payment and a right to reinstate the agreement under certain circumstances. Consumers using instalment loans would benefit from cost control of certain fees, such as optional insurance. Consumers of payday loans would have to wait" a grace period "between payday loans, giving them more time to consider their options." Also, "those who borrow repeatedly would have a longer repayment period in certain circumstances."

Overall, if passed, this bill would make Ontario a leader in all of Canada when it comes to protecting consumers from the risks of using alternative financial services.

1650

In terms of the actual procedures themselves, the government—as you know, a bill is introduced. Normally, it's introduced and passed almost automatically at first reading. Second reading is supposed to be confined to debate on the actual provisions of the bill, and that's the general debate that takes place. We then go to committee. That's why the consultations that are going on are valuable, because we then go to committee, and at committee we have an opportunity for people to make representations. And members of each of the political parties, should they see fit to do so, provide suggestions and, in fact, implement amendments for consideration. So all of those opportunities are still there, and to suggest they are not is simply inaccurate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to join in the debate on Bill 156. I want to thank the member for Bruce-Grey—

Owen Sound for his speech. I want to thank him for his kind words where he quoted my address this morning, where I talked about this government wanting to legislate over wanting to educate. Education on financial literacy is something that I think all three parties can get behind. I think we need to do more of it in our schools. I think it needs to be added to the curriculum. I think it's a very important component that for many Ontarians is lost.

But I do want to interject on what the member for St. Catharines said just a few moments ago. He very quietly outlined the process that should work in this Legislature for second reading and committee hearings. However, as we all know—and I've quoted him many times—when this government places a closure motion or a guillotine motion, where they choke off debate, using a term that the member for St. Catharines used quite often in this House, the reason I quote him is that I agree with him.

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: He's interjecting, but it's his words when he uses "choked off debate."

The member has brought a number of very good points forward. I'm glad he mentioned the member for Stormont, Dundas and South Glengarry, the critic, who spoke for an hour and really laid out the differences between our traditional banking system and the payday loan industry, which is why this bill is brought forward.

This morning I read a Toronto Star story from February 29 where they didn't even really acknowledge that this bill has been on the order paper since December 2015. It's basically languished on the order paper since last December. Again, I'm glad the government thinks this is a priority and I'm glad we're debating it this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise to respond to the comments made by the member of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Certainly, we both live in southwestern Ontario. I am in a more urban area; he's in a more rural. However, we see many of the same kinds of issues. Poverty is an important issue for my community in particular.

There was just a report by an advisory panel to the mayor on poverty in London, and it found that London has been over the provincial average in terms of the rate of poverty, regardless of the measure that's used. When we think about the context of this bill, who are these people who are using payday lenders? Who are the people who need to access a purchase, to own furniture and other things? They are some of the lowest-income Ontarians in our communities. They are people who are on ODSP and Ontario Works. When I hear from people who are on ODSP and Ontario Works that those cheques—even if we put these measures in place to get them cashed without penalty, those cheques just don't last the month. They barely cover the cost of rent, much less the cost of food and clothing, pharmaceuticals and any other emergency needs, immediate needs that people have.

So, in addition to this bill, we really have to look at the bigger picture. We have to look at what needs to be in place to protect and support the most vulnerable, the most disadvantaged, the most marginalized citizens in our province. One of the shortcomings of this bill, in fact, is the lack of protections to prevent rollover loans—people having to take out another loan to repay the last loan. That is something that needs to be addressed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for final comments.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you to the members who spoke from Nickel Belt, France Gélinas, and London West. They obviously are hearing very similar things as me: the challenges of people whom they represent to pay their bills and the need for something like this legislation.

Chair of Cabinet: I have the greatest respect. He has been here a long time. He has served the people of this province for a lot of years. But he didn't seem to like me talking about debt services and debt collection. That's maybe because of where they ran this province. Frankly, I don't respectfully understand how he can stand and condone, with his government, the amount of debt that they have accumulated under their watch.

He talked about being a leader in Canada. What he left out, Mr. Speaker, is they are the leader in Canada of debt, and that money is not going to help the people for whom we're all given the privilege of being here.

I'm going to quote my colleague from Leeds-Grenville: "The Liberals like to legislate over educate." He brought up a really good point: The Chair of Cabinet uses the term "choking off debate," while using closure motions, so we can't actually debate. He wanted to talk about how the process should work and teach us and give us the outline of how this place should work, and, yet, look at the number of pieces of legislation that they bring closure motions on, so that we can't bring the needs and the concerns of our constituents, who we are given the privilege to serve, to this House to actually have the debate.

It also reminds me—and I've said it in my remarks—that it's interesting that there is a process, but this government brought out their budget before they even allowed the budget consultation process to finish. Colleagues of mine here wanted to debate and hear some of that feedback, but the budget was presented.

It is my hope that this bill will ensure that those types of services are there. When we talk about education, one thing that we should be implementing is basic core mathematics and how to repay debt to all of our young people because, with this government, they're going to need that as a core piece of their education.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's once again my pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents of Windsor West, this time to speak on Bill 156, the Alternative Financial Services Statute Law Amendment Act.

Overall, this legislation has the potential to actually help many people in my riding and throughout Ontario

who are finding it more difficult to make ends meet. Often, we turn to payday loan companies for a temporary reprieve, but it is well documented that current rules allow these companies to trap consumers in vicious debt cycles that force people to take out loans just to pay off other loans. All too often, people are working just to pay off the interest on these loans. It's no secret that these companies are structured to make consumers dependent on the services that they provide.

Now, this is able to occur for a number of reasons. For instance, many of these companies target Ontarians who are living on low incomes. These are people with unstable or precarious employment and who struggle to afford even the most basic services.

In an article this past March, the Windsor Star outlined the scenario of a family whose hydro bill is in arrears, and the utility is threatening to disconnect their service. The article stated that if their hydro bill is \$200, a 10-day payday loan in Ontario will cost the family \$42. If they didn't pay the bill and their hydro was disconnected, it will cost at least \$95 just to have their services reconnected.

It's these situations that make people resort to using payday loan services, and I think it's important to be mindful of the structural issues that drive people to do this. One of the first lessons that we can take from this scenario is that Ontarians are paying too much for even the most basic services like hydro.

Last month, it was announced that hydro was going up once again, this time because of mild winter temperatures, meaning Ontarians used less energy than anticipated. Speaker, constituents in my riding saw right through the government's flawed logic and misplaced priorities. Using less energy should result in savings, but, amazingly, the cost of hydro went up again on Monday, the third price increase since November. To say that my constituents and the vast majority of Ontarians are disappointed and angry would be an understatement.

This will be the eighth year in a row that electricity rates are at least 9% higher than they were the previous year. A senior in my riding called my office and asked why he is being penalized for trying to conserve energy. Speaker, this gentleman was staying up past midnight just to do his laundry and spent many nights sitting in the dark just to find relief on his hydro bills. Government policies that lock us into paying an inflated price for energy drive people to resort to using payday loan services to pay for even the most basic services.

1700

Speaker, we also need to look at wages in Ontario. Here the issue is simple: The minimum wage in Ontario is too low, and it's time for the government to listen to New Democrats and commit to a \$15-an-hour minimum wage. Let's be clear: This won't abolish the use of payday loan services overnight, but it's the first step in empowering hard-working Ontarians with a wage that makes life more affordable. If we can do this, if we can empower Ontarians with the tools that will make payday loan companies less attractive, we can break the borrow-

ing cycle that sees too many Ontario families indebted to these institutions.

The legislation before us today can help with this. Overall, I think the bill has good intentions that can offer consumers protection and relief from predatory lending practices and exorbitant fees. Bill 156 amends three acts: the Collection and Debt Settlement Services Act, the Consumer Protection Act, and the Payday Loans Act. I'll draw attention to the more notable amendments. Amendments include expanding the exemptions relating to the act, introducing an administrative monetary penalty regime, and moving the collector licensing regime.

Some provisions of this legislation include placing limits on the fee that may be charged for cashing a government cheque. These regulations are yet to be announced, but may include:

- (1) a fixed amount;
- (2) a percentage of the face value of the cheque or any other amount calculated on the basis of the face value of the cheque;
- (3) an amount that results from the combination of (1) and (2); or
- (4) any amount determined by any other prescribed means.

The bill also allows the government to redefine the number of days the loan broker must wait since the borrower has paid the full outstanding balance under the first agreement before facilitating more than one payday loan between the same borrower and different lenders.

It permits the minister to make regulations that prohibit a lender from entering into more than the prescribed number of payday loan agreements with the same borrower in a one-year period; prohibit a loan broker from facilitating more than the prescribed number of payday loan agreements between the same borrower and different lenders in a one-year period; and prohibit licensees from offering or providing prescribed goods or services other than payday loans to anyone. It's unclear what these goods or services will be; they could be gift cards, for example.

The provisions I just outlined are well-intentioned, but good intentions alone won't protect Ontarians from predatory lending fees or help families get out of debt. While this legislation sets up a framework to help Ontarians, it does not compel the government to act in any meaningful way. Instead, we are supposed to trust this government to implement regulations at a later date.

Well, Ontario families are right to be skeptical. This bill was an opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of Ontarians who are having a hard time making ends meet. Unfortunately, this bill is another opportunity missed for the Liberals.

The concerns that Bill 156 are supposed to address have been around for years. The government started its review process back in 2013 and continues to stall in making any real progress on this file. The time for action is now. Once again, the Liberal government has managed to avoid accountability, particularly to those thousands of Ontarians who find themselves in financially precarious

circumstances. Ontarians deserve a government that will stand up for them and will offer consumers real protection and relief, not one that continues to find ways of doing just the bare minimum.

For years, New Democrats have called for real action to protect consumers and help make life more affordable for Ontarians. In December 2014, the NDP consumer services critic and deputy leader, MPP Jagmeet Singh, introduced a motion in the House that would cap lending fees to \$15 per \$100; extend the grace period consumers have to pay back their loans without penalty; create a database to enforce the ban on rollover loans; and ensure the government works with financial institutions to provide alternative services, like credit unions and postal banking, in low-income communities.

With the exception of extending the grace period, none of the other provisions are addressed in this bill. New Democrats will keep fighting for real change in Ontario.

Speaker, I'd like to thank you for the time today. I look forward to continuing debate on this legislation. I'd like to close by reminding the government that my constituents can't wait for real action on these issues—I cannot stress that enough—particularly the constituents of Windsor West. Although people across Windsor and Essex county are struggling, we find two low-income pockets within Windsor West. These are the people who use these payday lending facilities. They're the ones who are being victimized time and time again.

Good intentions alone won't help families in my riding struggling to pay their hydro bills. They won't help my constituents pay interest on their loans or break the debt cycle that they are trapped in. We are asking that the government please commit to real action on these issues and commit to it today.

As I stated, my constituents are struggling as we've seen the hydro rates go up. Many of my constituents live on ODSP or OW. They're on social assistance. There are seniors who are on fixed incomes. We see homeless people who are struggling financially. They're living in homeless shelters or out on the street and they're using what little money they can to try to find work or to try to feed themselves—because we're also finding that the food banks within Windsor and Essex county are struggling.

More and more people are struggling financially, especially now that the cost of hydro has gone up. Those people who would normally buy a little bit extra when they're at the grocery store and donate it to the food banks or donate it to the Windsor Youth Centre, which helps homeless and at-risk teens and provides them with meals during the day or sends them home with some groceries or gives them money to be able to get on a bus and for lunch, or gives them a lunch to eat—these community organizations themselves are now starting to struggle because the people in my community do not have the funds available in order to be able to help these organizations.

We need this government to commit to fixing what's wrong with payday loans. We need them to commit to

really taking action on this, not commit to committing again to take action. We actually need them to take action. Words are not enough anymore. People across Ontario are struggling and they need the government to act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm pleased to be able to stand and offer some comments about Bill 156, the Alternative Financial Services Statute Law Amendment Act of 2015. As we know, the proposed legislation will look at the Collection and Debt Settlement Services Act, the Consumer Protection Act and the Payday Loans Act, with a view to offering Ontario consumers greater protection.

One of the things that comes to mind and is perhaps foremost in our minds is the Payday Loans Act and the amendments there. If I can, Mr. Speaker, for a second, the amendments are going to focus on disclosures and reducing the likelihood of consumers entering into repeat borrowing, because the government heard from users across the province and from those who work in the industry that this is a concern. It will provide for an extended payment plan to consumers entering a third loan agreement in 62 days—exceptionally important. It will restrict payday lenders from offering a loan to a borrower until seven days have passed since their last payday loan, and it will restrict the loan brokers from arranging a loan for a borrower until seven days have passed since their last payday loan—lots of important finessing.

I know one of the big questions that we get asked is, why not just outlaw these organizations? We heard from anti-poverty organizations across the province that that's just not a viable thing to do. Too many people need these services. But we have to make sure that consumers are protected if and when they need to use a payday loan venue.

I think some of the important things when it comes to the Collection and Debt Settlement Services Act have been dealt with. I'll leave it there for now, Mr. Speaker.

1710

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to commend the member from Windsor West for bringing the concerns of her constituents to the floor of the assembly with respect to payday loans.

I was the critic for the Progressive Conservative Party back in, I believe, 2007-08, when we had first dealt with payday loans. I think that, like many members in this assembly, I'm of two minds. I think that, in light of the fact that so many families are struggling, there does need to be a service like this. However, they've also put our constituents, in many cases, into even more financial trouble.

I think the issue here is striking a good balance that understands that there is a need for a niche market like this. Maybe the banks and co-operatives should consider having those types of opportunities, but in the absence, they're almost a necessity.

I think that the member from Windsor West alluded to it—it's interesting because, earlier this morning, I was speaking about the ORPP. Some of the issues that concern me about the ORPP are the same issues that concern me about payday lending. That is the fact that so many Ontarians are stretched to the max: the single-largest sales tax increase in Ontario's history under this government; the single-largest income tax increase in Ontario's history under this government; the single-largest gas tax increase in Ontario's history under this government; and the single-largest job-killing payroll tax in Ontario's history under this government. Speaker, beyond that, we look at the single-largest hydro rate increases in this Ontario's history under this government.

It is hard for Ontarians to make ends meet. I can tell you that I hear that time and again from the people of Nepean–Carleton. The residents of the city of Ottawa have continuously sent their money to Queen's Park without a good return on investment.

This is yet another example of our opportunity to be able to speak about these challenges that our people face.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I want to congratulate the member from Windsor West for bringing a very balanced view on this bill. First, she went through what is in the bill, as it is written, so we understand that a lot of what is intended to happen is not exactly in this bill. A lot of the goodwill of what we want to get to will be in regulations that are yet to be seen, yet to be written or yet to be implemented. She brought back a number of good ideas that should be added to this bill. We debated similar issues in 2008, when payday loans were first debated. We realized that we did not get it right. Let's take our time and get it right. She brought forward a number of good suggestions that I hope will be put into amendments and accepted by the majority Liberal government.

Legislation should not be incremental work. When we put a piece of legislation forward, we should have done the work to make sure that it is good, that it stands on its own and that it is there to last.

Lastly, what she did was to bring forward examples from her riding as to why it is that this Legislature needs to listen to the suggestions that she made and also what it means for the people of Windsor West. She brought forward a number of good examples as to why we need to act. The one about the family looking at the price of hydro disconnection versus payday loans is really sad, but it is reality. If this doesn't motivate us to do it right and to get it done, then I don't know what will.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's certainly a pleasure for me to rise this afternoon and make a few comments concerning the great introduction by the member from Windsor West. Like the member from Nickel Belt said, she brought forward a number of great ideas. Those are the types of ideas that get brought forward in a debate such as this and can be incorporated

at the committee level into amendments to the bill to make it even stronger.

This bill is the culmination of a number of requests that we receive as MPPs across all political parties from individuals who are having issues raising the funds for their day-to-day lives. We get asked on a regular basis, "What are you doing to protect Ontario consumers?"

Back in December, when we first introduced this piece of legislation, we wanted to amend the Payday Loans Act, the Consumer Protection Act, and the Collection and Debt Settlement Services Act. This proposed legislation will strengthen consumer protection in areas of payday lending, other alternative finance services and debt collection by (a) protecting consumers who borrow from payday lenders, of course at very high rates of interest; (b) protecting consumers from the unexpected costs of other alternative financial services; and (c) protecting consumers with debt-collector rules that apply broadly.

We get asked a lot of other questions as MPPs. What problems does this bill propose to solve? Well, let me tell you. Some alternative financial services are often targeted at consumers with limited financial resources or in financially vulnerable situations, and our government wants to ensure that consumers using these services are aware of the cost, their options and their rights.

I just wanted to put a few points on record, Mr. Speaker. It's very difficult at times to be following the member from Windsor West, the member from Newmarket–Aurora, the member from Nepean–Carleton and especially the eloquent member from Nickel Belt, but it's a pleasure to speak today, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Windsor West for final comments.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker. I would also like to thank the members from Newmarket–Aurora and Nepean–Carleton, my colleague from Nickel Belt and the last speaker, the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

I just want to touch on, really, the heart of this issue. Aside from predatory lenders, the issue is affordability. If people had a fair wage for doing their job, if they had stability in their job, not what the government likes to call the "mobile contemporary workforce," which is just fluff for what it really is, which is unstable precarious work—people don't want to be part of a mobile contemporary workforce. They want a stable job, something they can count on. If people could afford to pay their hydro bill and not have to decide between the hydro bill and food or the hydro bill and dressing their children before they send them off to school hungry in most cases—if we didn't see ridings like the northern ridings, where in some cases they're paying nearly 30 cents a litre more for gasoline, ridings where there's more ground to cover as opposed to in my riding, where everything is very close by. It's very urban and everything is very close by. In the north, they have a lot of driving to do in some cases to get to where they need to go. That's predatory, to charge them more for gas, knowing that they have to travel further to get where they're going to

go. That hurts the bottom line when it comes to their household income. I think if the government was to address some of those issues, we would see fewer and fewer people going to payday loan lenders.

Certainly for those people who do need to access these services, and until the government fixes those problems, we need to see concrete action taken by the government to actually stop the predatory practices of these payday loans. We don't need to hear about it anymore. We need to see action, and we actually want them in committee to listen to some of the recommendations coming from all sides.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, am I out of turn? Did the minister responsible for seniors affairs want to speak? No, I guess not. Okay.

It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to join—just for a few minutes, unfortunately—this debate, as it has now reached the point where we only have 10 minutes. I want to be a little bit retrospective here about how, years ago, we had no such thing as payday loan offices on the street corners, or shops or whatever you want to call them—storefronts. We lived in a different time. But today, they seem to be everywhere. My colleague from Leeds–Grenville spoke about it. Why are we not emphasizing more the issue of financial literacy?

Mr. Steve Clark: Educate, don't legislate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Educate, don't legislate—financial literacy for our children. We're living in a society where we have been conditioned to borrow, borrow, borrow.

1720

I know times have changed and we have to have financing; we understand that. The economy, the world, works on financing and financiers and extending payments so that you can make big projects and stuff like that. I remember my father talking to me once about borrowing money and that, and never once in his life did he borrow money. Not once in his entire life did he personally borrow money. In business, as it evolved, we had a line of credit at the bank, so if you had a big shipment come in and you didn't have quite enough in the current account—that type of thing—you'd have some coverage that way. On a personal basis, he never borrowed a nickel in his life, because everything he bought, purchased and did, building a home, all of those kinds of things were done when he had put the money away and saved it and then could afford to do it. It didn't matter if it was buying a car or anything like that; he never borrowed money—the good old days.

My good friend from York West is not the youngest guy in the House. He remembers the good old days. Maybe he's never borrowed a nickel in his life. I don't know. He's smiling. He's never borrowed a nickel in his life. Look at him. He never borrowed a nickel in his life. You should be helping me go into these schools and talk

to these children about financial literacy, because today we're living in a society where if you want something, "Holy Hannah, look at the price of that." "Don't worry. Just go borrow the money—easy payments. I love this." Well, I don't love it.

The bank of Nova Scotia—what do they call it—Scotiabank: "You're richer than you think." It's funny. The guy goes in there and says, "Yeah"—and she says something like, "Oh, you're doing very well on your student loan." He says, "Yeah, but I really want to take my dad on this road trip for his birthday." So the lady goes on her computer, punches a few keys, comes back and she says, "I moved some things around and saved you \$1,500 a year."

Now, how can you borrow more money and save \$1,500 a year? That's the kind of message that we're sending out to our society today: "We moved some things around and saved you money. You're going to borrow more money, which means you're going to owe more, but I've saved you \$1,500 a year."

I had a brother-in-law who used to say that my sister—I shouldn't say this about my sister—"Lorna considers a credit limit on a credit card an obligation." Whatever the credit limit was, she had to go out and spend that.

Mr. Bill Walker: Are you sure she wasn't a Liberal?

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, no. But she never failed to pay her bills, and she's the most generous person that you'd ever meet in your life. My son Lucas is her godson and he's a lucky boy. She's always made sure that on his birthday there's something very nice for Lucas. Christmas, birthday; it doesn't matter. Lorna always makes sure that Lucas is well taken care of.

Having said that, I want to get back to the meat of the matter here—not meatless Mondays like the Minister of the Environment wants, but the meat of the matter, which is what my colleague from Leeds–Grenville was saying: We need to teach our young people more about financial literacy so they don't find themselves in a financial bind. Like I was saying this morning when we were talking about the bill on ORPP, I said to my son, "Every time you get a paycheque, pay yourself first. Put some money away, because you never know when a rainy day will happen."

But we live in a society where people are making more money than they ever made before, yet so many of them are two bad breaks away from the street, as they say, two bad breaks away from the street because they don't manage their money very well. As a consequence—and I'm not picking on anybody individually, because this is what society has come to expect.

You know, if you saw a government like this 50 years ago that had the kind of a debt that this Liberal-spending government has—

Mr. Bill Walker: Overspending government.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —overspending government has done to Ontario, people would be apoplectic. But now, you talk about a \$300-billion debt and they don't even quite conceive it, because everybody believes the

next best thing to having a million dollars is owing a million dollars. If you owe it, you've got all the things that the million dollars was going to buy you anyway, and we'll let tomorrow look after tomorrow.

So our philosophy about how we conduct our own lives has spawned a different attitude when it comes to borrowing and owing money. We've got these Money Marts, these—what do you call them?—payday loan establishments, springing up all over the place. I had an opinion of them years ago: I thought that, really, they were a bunch of shysters that were just looking to take advantage of the vulnerable. But then we start to realize and learn about who the clientele are. Part of it is, I say, about this attitude we have in society: People actually have good, solid incomes and steady jobs, but they're always just right on the edge because they're living a lifestyle where every dollar is spoken for. Every dollar is spoken for, and the banks are as guilty as anybody; they're just dying to give you money—dying to give you money.

You know, again, I shouldn't be talking too much personal stuff but, a couple of years ago my son, who didn't even have a job—he was finished with post-secondary but he didn't have a steady job yet. He didn't even tell me, because he was driving a car of mine for years, but he just went down to Belleville one Saturday, or some Friday afternoon or whatever the heck it was, and came home with a brand new car. He didn't have a job, and they financed him for a brand new car.

He's working now. He's got a good job. He's an apprentice carpenter making reasonable money, with opportunities to keep making more as he gets closer to a journeyman and stuff like that. He's making all his payments. He's not depending on daddy to pay for the car. He's making all those payments himself, and maybe it was a good thing. But the fact that we live in a society where you could go in with not even a job and buy a car makes you wonder.

Back in the 1950s, they had only started allowing people to borrow money to purchase a car. It only started in the 1950s that you could borrow money to buy a car. We have had a complete sea change over the last 50 years about how we treat financing and the borrowing of money. If we have that kind of change in our society, then we also have a responsibility to educate the young people of today about financial literacy, so that they don't find themselves in a financial bind a few years down the road. We have that responsibility, and I don't think we're doing a very good job of it. This government would rather have you talking about some airy-fairy flowery stuff in school, instead of learning about financial literacy and about how to handle your money so you don't run into problems down the road.

I wish I had more time, Speaker; I'd actually get to speak to the bill. But my time, as you see by the clock, is up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you—I think. Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always a pleasure to follow the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Since

he didn't stay on the bill, I would like to take a minute to comment on something that he would understand.

I'm sure this House would join me in expressing our regrets. One of my constituents, Len Lear, was the coach of the Temiskaming Northern Loons Swim Club. He was coming home from a district meet in Markham on Sunday night, and he hit a moose. So I think we would all join in expressing our regrets to his family. It's something I'm sure that you would understand.

Thank you, Speaker, for allowing me to do that.

1730

Getting back to the issue at hand, I'm going to comment specifically to the member, Mr. Yakabuski. Lots of times, I quote my father here. My father told me—a bit opposite of what the member said—when I started farming to borrow as much money as I could, but to make sure that the things I bought either rose in value or made money. I think that there's a difference between the debt when you build up a business and the debt when you buy a house, or the debt that, in the end, drags you down. I think that's what the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke was talking about.

I'm hoping that, sometime in the future, I get my 10 minutes to speak to the bill. But I'd like to thank you, Speaker, and thank the member for allowing me to take that time to express our regrets to the Lear family.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The minister for seniors affairs.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Interjection.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Finally, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke gets his wish, and so I get to say a couple of things about the bill itself and, of course, the comments that he so eloquently made.

I also want to express my sympathies to the friend of the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane on the accident.

But a couple of things that the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said about the bill that is for discussion—and it's for discussion because we want to send it to second reading, and then, of course, we'll have more consultation and come back here for more consultation.

Education: It's a wonderful thing to say that we have to educate the young people, which is important, but there are a lot of other people who need to be educated as well. It's not only the young people. It would be nice if we could educate everybody at a young age, so when they reach my kind of age, if you will, and older, they would be educated. Unfortunately, we have a lot of people in our society who didn't get the education that they should have on a particular area. This is a very important area and it affects a lot of people.

I have tell my friend across that when I purchased my first house, I had to have a second mortgage at 24%. But we paid it off.

The bill contains a lot of good measures. It wants to improve the way that those people in need of borrowing

some money have some protection. I hope that with this bill we can improve that, and we'll look across to make some good recommendations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for his comments. I'm glad that he mentioned me and the issue of financial literacy.

I actually have a letter from one of my constituents. I recently wrote to Minister Sandals about this. I want to quote some of the excerpts of the letter from Ms. Kasey Mooibroek:

"I am writing concerning a need for money management to become part of the secondary school curriculum. It has already been incorporated into many schools in England and it would be incredibly beneficial for Canadians to learn about debt, credit, paying bills, and how to manage their money. This would allow students to move out after high school and have an educated idea of how to spend their money while living on a budget.

"An article written in 2013 by the Guardian titled, 'Financial Education to Become Compulsory in Schools,' elaborated on the way the curriculum has been formatted in England. This curriculum allows students as young as 11 to understand financial mathematics by calculating interest, and by 14 they will learn more about sophisticated financial products and services.

"This system would be very beneficial for Canadians as the next generation would have a better idea of how to use their money wisely, and less people would be living in debt. I graduated high school in 2013 and did not have any appreciation for money. Not until I spent all of the loans given to me through OSAP and came home to live with my parents once again did I appreciate what debt truly means. Almost everyone I know in their twenties spend money recklessly because a lot of people do not appreciate the cost of living and rely heavily on loans."

This is the political reality in many ridings. This is why I've mentioned the issue of education as part of this debate. Regardless of how you feel about this bill or whether you think it should be amended, this is something that is real—it's in our constituency offices on a weekly basis—and I think the government needs to act.

I want to thank Ms. Mooibroek for writing to me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, if you will allow me a few seconds to support the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane and the family of Len Lear, who had this terrible motor vehicle accident on Sunday, and offer my deepest sympathies to the family.

In response to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, the idea is good. How come we don't do better with financial literacy? How come we have an entire generation of educated young people starting out in life full of energy and wanting to do better, to do good for themselves and to better the world, and they come out of school with those ginormous student loans? This is

how they hit their first job: with this humongous anchor attached to them. They can either panic right out and say, "How am I ever going to pay back my student loan?" or forget about it and continue on this path that, "Loans don't matter. I will live my life and pretend that this humongous anchor is not attached to me and continue to borrow like a drunken sailor," as some of them would say.

I would say financial literacy would go a long way towards changing all this, making them realize that yes, getting an education is important but managing your debt is also important. I would say we should look as to why is it that our kids start their first job with such enormous student loans. Why is it that families have such a hard time making ends meet? Education would certainly be a path towards improvement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for final comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, the minister responsible for seniors, the member for Leeds–Grenville and the eloquent member from Nickel Belt as well for their comments.

I do want to pass on our condolences to the family of Len Lear for their tragic loss as well. Anybody who lives in a rural part of this province knows how dangerous it can be on the highways when the moose are out.

I want to thank everybody for their comments. They focused more on what I spoke about, which was the issue of financial literacy, than the bill itself. I respect the comments of the minister who said that it's not just the young people but a lot of other people—and he's right. However, it's the young people who we still have in school. We can't lose this opportunity for those people who are in school today, so that we don't lose the opportunity that we failed to take on the generations that have left school. They're the ones who are most likely having the financial challenges with managing their household budgets in today's world.

It is a difficult world; there's no question about it. The pressure of society to buy this or buy that—you can't turn on the television, you can't have the radio on, social media or anything. Everything is, "Buy, buy, buy," and "Spend, spend, spend." "You've got to have this or you're out of touch. You've got to have this or you're not keeping up with the Joneses or the Clarks."

There's a lot of pressure on people to make purchases. The reality is, so many people make purchases they don't need. When they stretch their budgets at the end of the month, even though they're gainfully employed—and yes, there are people who are struggling and vulnerable who have to resort to short-term loans on a regular basis, but there are also people who are gainfully employed.

This is an issue of money management. Financial literacy training in our schools: Get on it as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from Nickelbelt—Belt.

1740

M^{me} France Gélinas: Nickel Belt. I feel like I should sing. Should I try that?

Interjection: No.

M^{me} France Gélinas: No, eh? All right.

It is my opportunity to put a few things on the record regarding Bill 156, the Alternative Financial Services Statute Law Amendment Act. Basically, Speaker, what the bill is meant to do is strengthen protection for consumers who use what we call alternative financial services. Right now, if you look at where most people do their financing, it's either at a bank, at a credit union or at a *caisse populaire*. Those have sets of regulations under which they do their business that protect consumers, but for a multitude of reasons—and some of my colleagues have covered some, and I will cover some of my own—a lot of people are not able to deal with a *caisse populaire* or the credit union or the bank, so they end up in what is called alternative financing services, which is what most of us call payday loans.

So given that they are outside of the credit unions, the banks, the *caisses populaires*, they really have very little regulation about them, and we have seen that the practices that they use tend to be very predatory. They really target people of low income or people who find themselves in a financial crisis in their lives, often for a reason that has nothing to do with bad credit or bad management or bad financing. It's simply because of bad luck within their lives.

I represent a riding in northern Ontario called Nickel Belt that is made up of 33 little communities. None of them are big enough to be called a city or to have municipal councillors or anything of the sort. They are local services boards, they are unincorporated areas. Most of them tend to be small, although altogether, they make up close to 90,000 people. They live in smaller communities. For the life of me, I can't understand why it is that in most of those communities, we are not able to get a pharmacy to stay in there; we are not able to recruit a physician or a nurse practitioner to come and provide services; we are not able to bring a school, because most of them have been closed and the kids get bused out. A lot of them don't even have a restaurant or a grocery store or many of the other services that we find, but a lot of them have payday loans. How can it be that, apparently, the community is too small to support a restaurant, too small to support a grocery store, too small to support a school or a pharmacy or a physician, or anything else, but it is big enough to support a payday loan operator?

The health unit does a very good job of looking at the social determinants of health within the health unit, the Sudbury and District Health Unit area. They cover a good part of my riding and they map out where the areas of poverty are. So you can put out this map and look at where the areas of poverty are. The map is colour-coded so you see that in some parts of my riding, there are really deep pockets of poverty. It's funny, Speaker, because those tend to also be the places where the payday

lender decides to open up shop. I don't like that; I don't like that a bit. Why is it that some of them get a government cheque in writing, an actual cheque, not a big amount—they are hundreds of dollars, sometimes less than a hundred dollars. Everybody knows that the government is going to be good for that cheque. The government is going to give you the money. They're not going to default on the cheque. They're not going to pack up and leave or anything like that. But yet, to go and cash such a cheque at the payday loan, because the payday loan is the only show in town, you will pay; 15%, 18%, 20% of the value of the cheque will be racked up by those businesses. And yet, here we stand.

I was there in 2008, Speaker. I was there when the first bill was brought forward to regulate payday loans. We knew of those practices back then, but we missed the boat. And here we have a bill that is full of good intentions. The bill is just that: It is a wish list of good intentions that the government plans to address. But none of that is in the bill. The bill just tells us that they plan to address this in regulations that will come at a date yet to be announced, in a form that none of us have had an opportunity to read and that only the government will control.

I say to that, Speaker, that I see good intentions. When you read the bill, you see everything that they have the intention of doing, and I recognize a good intention when I see it. They have the good intention of protecting consumers, but unfortunately, it falls short. Good intentions and actions are two completely different things. Good intentions do not protect anybody. Good intentions do not stop the behaviour of people who have made it their business to prey upon the poor and the needy, or the people who unfortunately have had bad luck in their lives and have had to turn themselves towards borrowing money from them.

So I would urge the government to really look at the bill, to listen to the suggestions that we are making. Certainly, our colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton—sorry about that; I didn't spit that out as neatly as I would have liked—has put a number of those suggestions on the docket. In 2014, he put forward that we should cap lending fees at \$15 per \$100 that you borrow; extend the grace period that consumers have to pay back their loans without penalty; create a database to enforce the ban on rollover loans—a rollover loan means that you borrow money to pay another loan, and you keep doing that, sinking yourself deeper and deeper into a hole where you will never see the light of day again; and ensure the government works with financial institutions to provide alternative services, like credit unions and postal banking, in low-income communities.

I must say that I have a fantastic network of credit unions in my riding, and I also have a fantastic network of *caisses populaires*, which really try to go into areas where the banks won't go, in areas where people basically need them. But they also need to have the tools in order to be able to do that.

Ça me fait toujours plaisir de participer aux débats sur les différents projets de loi qui sont présentés. Ici, on a un

nouveau projet de loi pour les institutions qui font des prêts instantanés. Ces institutions-là ont tendance à être installées dans des régions où il y a beaucoup de pauvreté.

Je peux parler pour mon comté : Nickel Belt, c'est 33 petites communautés. Dans plusieurs de ces communautés-là, les gens vivent avec beaucoup de pauvreté, et c'est surtout dans ces communautés-là que l'on retrouve ces institutions qui sont capables de te donner un prêt le même jour.

Ce sont des institutions qui ont besoin de réglementation, et qui ont besoin que l'on mette des règlements en place pour protéger les gens et pour changer le type de pratique qu'elles ont, parce qu'on voit souvent que les taux pour emprunter de l'argent et les taux pour encaisser un chèque sont tellement hauts qu'il n'y a aucune façon d'expliquer ces dépenses-là.

J'encouragerais le gouvernement à écouter les recommandations que l'on a faites et à faire des changements pour que les vœux pieux deviennent des actions.

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Chris Ballard: Once again, I'm pleased to be able to stand to talk a little bit about this bill and simply say that there were some very good comments that the member for Nickel Belt raised in her time.

I would suggest that this bill goes beyond simply purporting some good intentions. Through regulation, we will see some good action. In fact, I understand it's the intent of government to have the regulations developed and in place by 2017. I know there's perhaps a philosophical difference about how modern legislation is created, but most modern parliamentary bodies spend time developing regulations. The world changes so fast that it allows government to tweak regulations faster to meet the changes than to go back and create new legislation.

With that said, I just wanted to touch on a couple of the key things that are near and dear to what I've heard across Ontario. One of them is: Really, what will this bill do? What problem will the bill solve? We know that some alternative financial services are often targeted at consumers with limited financial resources or in a financially vulnerable situation. We heard of a number of such situations occurring around that today. Our government wants to ensure that consumers using these services are aware of the costs, aware of their options and aware of their rights. That is so important.

Just a brief word about alternative financial services, because I heard a comment about the cost of cashing government-issued cheques: That is part of this, and that will be addressed as we move forward. Consumers will be better protected with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm glad to comment on the member from Nickel Belt's discussion this afternoon. I realize she

has raised some valid points. Listening to other discussions going on today, I do want to highlight what the minister for seniors raised earlier about financial literacy. I think it's important that the government does take the time. I know we have this bill put in front in order to deal with people with hardship who are having to cash a cheque because they're unable to make it to payday without having to cash a cheque early, but financial literacy in our school system, I think, would start to alleviate this problem down the road.

Other than getting the government's finances in order—I think that has been talked about enough on this side today—I think of the aspect of financial literacy. I remember that when I graduated university, my brother gave me the book *The Wealthy Barber*, which is a neat book to read. It talked about paying yourself first and preparing for the future. I think maybe that type of book—I don't, as I say, promote *The Wealthy Barber*, but I think it's a great book—should be studied in high school, so that by the time our children get through university—they'll be in debt quite heavily because that's what's happening nowadays with kids, but they're able to deal with that situation and plan and finance their lives down the road. That will deal with something down the future. I hope this government takes the time and institutes financial literacy into our school system.

I'm hoping that when this bill gets through, there's some sort of balance. In my city of St. Thomas, where I'm from, these payday loan sites have just blossomed. It used to be that downtown St. Thomas was full of storefronts and shopping, and now we have a lot of payday loans. I think that just speaks volumes to where Ontario has headed over the past 12 years under this government. Things need to change.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

M. Gilles Bisson: Je pense que la députée de Nickel Belt soulève un point très intéressant faisant affaire avec les emprunts instantanés.

Le gouvernement parle une belle ligne. Ils sont en train de dire qu'ils vont faire quelque chose, mais quand tu regardes à l'intérieur du projet de loi, il n'y a pas beaucoup de détails quant à comment ça va marcher dans le sens de vraiment protéger ceux qui empruntent de l'argent de ces organisations-là pour des raisons qu'on comprend et qui sont très valables. Ce monde-là se trouve dans une situation qu'on a tous traversée à un temps ou à un autre. Ils sont dans une situation économique où ils ont besoin d'acheter des « groceries », où ils ont besoin de payer quelque chose, et ils n'ont pas d'argent. So, ils s'en vont à un emprunt instantané et ils ont besoin de payer des frais qui font que c'est pas mal dur d'être capable d'arriver.

Le gouvernement, je pense, veut avoir, comme ils disent en anglais, la « photo op ». Ils veulent avoir l'opportunité d'être capables de se planter devant une caméra et de dire : « Regardez, comme gouvernement, comment on est bien et comment on est bon. » Mais quand tu regardes à l'intérieur du projet de loi, il n'y a

pas vraiment gros là pour être capable de dire que ce monde qui utilise ces emprunts instantanés va être protégé d'une manière ou d'une autre. Ils vont encore payer des gros intérêts et ils vont encore avoir des pénalités telles qu'on en voit présentement dans ces emprunts-là. Comment est-ce que ça aide le monde qui a besoin d'utiliser de l'argent de ces institutions-là parce qu'ils n'ont pas de carte de crédit ou que la carte de crédit est finie; qu'ils n'ont plus accès aux banques pour être capables d'emprunter de l'argent; ou qu'ils ne peuvent pas aller à la caisse populaire, au « credit union »? Ils en sont rendus au point où c'est le seul mécanisme qu'ils ont pour être capables d'emprunter.

Si on va avoir ces institutions-là, je comprends qu'elles ont besoin d'être capables de faire un petit profit, mais ce doit être un petit profit qui n'est pas sur le dos des plus diminués dans notre société qui se trouvent dans une situation précaire et qui ont besoin d'aller à ces institutions-là qui en prennent avantage. Le gouvernement peut se péter les bretelles tant qu'il le veut, mais à la fin de la journée il n'y pas grand-chose dans ce projet de loi pour être capable d'être bien content.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I have to say that I have very much enjoyed the remarks by the member from Nickel Belt, especially when she mentioned the various communities in her area. Given the area, yes, you would find this type of business established in those areas and indeed preying on the local communities. But I have to say that her community is not the only one.

I have pockets my area where banks have moved away. We have no caisses populaires, no credit unions and no other banks. Unfortunately, these people now are so popular with this type of banking, if you will, or payday loans or shops that they are competing among themselves. They have become so popular now that they are competing among themselves.

Unfortunately, yes, there are too many factors. Education is a very important one for the young and for the old. Habits are very important. Life is full of temptation, especially when it comes to money. I don't have to tell you, I'm sure, that you have a community where you witness some situation where people spend money without thinking about it. They want to go on a vacation—a “fly today, pay tomorrow” kind of a thing.

It's important. The legislation that is in front of us doesn't deal with banks or credit unions; it deals with the payday shops, the ones people can go in and out of and borrow a few hundred dollars. They're being penalized so heavily that then they fall behind and they even get worse, and they go back and get more penalized. I think we want to make it easier and better for not only for the customers but for the payday loan shop as well, that there is more control. This is all on behalf of the people that we represent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Nickel Belt for final comments.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank everybody who has given me feedback: the member from Newmarket–Aurora, the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, my colleague from Timmins–James Bay and of course the minister responsible for seniors.

This is a bill where I would say we all agree that the practices of the people who work within the payday loan industry need to be regulated. Where we fall apart is on what kind of regulation we should put forward. I would say that we are pretty much aligned when it comes to the vision as to where we want to get to. Where we're not quite as aligned is that we on the NDP side want to see it in legislation. We want to see that the way that the industry will be regulated will be in legislation: things such as capped lending fees at \$15 per \$100 borrowed; things like extending the grace periods that consumers have to pay back their loan without penalty; things like creating a database to enforce the ban on rollover loans; and things like ensuring that the government works with financial institutions to provide alternative services—like credit unions, caisses populaires, postal banking etc.—in low-income communities. We want to see this in legislation. Where the bill falls short is that it talks about all of this—it talks about the Collection and Debt Settlement Services Act; it talks about the Consumer Protection Act; it talks about the Payday Loans Act—and it says what it will do at a later time.

1800

Let's work in the present. Let's bring forward a piece of legislation we can all be proud of, that will get results, and bring it now.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

There is a late show. I will give the House a few moments to vacate if they would wish.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

GASOLINE PRICES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Timmins–James Bay has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Transportation. The member has up to five minutes to debate this matter, and the minister—in this case, the parliamentary assistant—may reply for up to five minutes.

I now recognize the member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank the Conservative House leader for agreeing to stay and listen to what I have to say.

The other day in the House, on Monday, I believe, I got up and asked what I thought was a very simple question. The price of gas a couple of weeks ago in

Ontario—there was almost a 25-cent-a-litre difference between southern and northern Ontario. Nobody's going to make me believe, or make anybody else believe in this province, that there could be a 25-cent-a-litre difference in gas across this province. When you can take a case of beer and sell it in Cornwall for the very same price you sell it in Kenora—certainly if we can sell beer at the same price, we should be able to sell gas at a similar price.

Instead, what we've got is the refiners in this province—I shouldn't even say in this province; the refiners in this country—who essentially band together and decide that they're going to set the price, depending on your market, higher than another area.

So I've ask the government a very simple thing: Back in the 1970s, Stephen Lewis was the head of the New Democratic Party of Ontario and Mr. Davis was Premier of Ontario. At the time, we were going through the same thing. You'll remember that awful gas price crisis that was going on at the time, where the price of gas was going through the roof. There were these gas differentials going across the province that were equally as bad, but to a different magnitude. But at the time, Stephen Lewis, the leader of the New Democratic Party, got up in the House and said, "Listen, you have the authority to regulate the price of gas. You may not have to do so, but what you at least should do as Premier is call in the gas companies, the refiners and say, 'Either you get yourselves under control, when it comes to the price of gas and the differentials from one part of the province to the other, or else we're going to do it for you by way of regulation.'"

The industry understood that because the Premier had called people into his office in the Legislature to have this discussion. They didn't want to get regulated, and they went out and fixed the problem. For years, there was always a bit of a differential, but it was not what we're seeing today.

Today, I decided, for the point of this question, to look at the price of gas in Ontario. Today, from what I saw, you'll pay 94 cents in Alliston, you'll pay 93 cents in Windsor, but you're paying \$1.10 in Timmins—and I haven't looked at Kapuskasing and every other point north. There's a 15-cent-a-litre difference today in the price of gas in this province when there shouldn't be. You're not going to tell me it costs 15 cents a litre to transport gas that's coming from Alberta to southern Ontario—it has to come through northern Ontario to get to southern Ontario—and we're going to have to pay more for the price of gas.

I said to the government across the way, "Will you, as the Minister of Transportation, call these people in and tell them to get themselves under control or else you're prepared to regulate?" What did I get? The Minister of Transportation said, "Let me talk about all the great things we're doing in northern Ontario," and went on to list some of the things he thought were great. I responded and said, "Listen, you're the guys who took the train out of northern Ontario. You're the guys who jacked up the

price of hydro in northern Ontario. You're the guys who cut the buses in northern Ontario. You're the guys who essentially drove Xstrata's Timmins refinery/smelter out of the province of Ontario into Quebec because of the high price of gas." I said, "Is this comedy hour or is this question period?"

On the supplementary, I got to ask the question again, but this time it was referred off to the Minister of Energy—and this is the reason for my late show. I said to the Minister of Energy, "Minister, are you prepared to call in the gas companies, the refiners, and tell them to get themselves under control or else you, as the Minister of Energy, through the Ontario Energy Board, are going to put these people in their place?" What did he answer? "It's a federal responsibility." Excuse me? A federal responsibility?

There are five provinces in Canada that have decided to do various types of regulation on gas prices. Some are better than others. The province of Quebec has probably the more expensive of the systems of regulation. Today, when I looked at the price of gas in the province of Quebec, it was running about \$1.03. But here's the interesting part: If you're in Montreal, it's \$1.04; if you're in Rouyn-Noranda, in northern Quebec, you're paying \$1.03.

If you're in southern Ontario, you're paying 94 cents; if you're in northern Ontario, you're paying \$1.10. There's a 15-cent-a-litre difference in the province of Ontario, north to south, where there doesn't have to be one. If you look at the model in New Brunswick, across the province they're paying 95 cents. So clearly there are models of regulation out there that Ontario can learn from that would allow us to set the price of gas so that refiners and gas stations can make a profit, but it wouldn't be on the backs of the consumers of Ontario to have to pay more for the commodity than we presently do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, the member from Cambridge, has up to five minutes to respond.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Let me say that it's a pleasure to be here this evening to be able to provide some clarification to the member opposite on this subject. As the member should be well aware, gas prices are variable. This means that everything from weather to local supply and demand to global market crises can all affect the overall price of gasoline.

While we're talking about the differences in gas prices between northern and southern Ontario, we need to look at a number of factors. Whether it's lower volumes per outlet—which increases the cost per litre of gas—higher wholesale and retail costs, the fact that northern distribution terminals are located farther away from refining centres, or that gasoline often requires transportation by rail or truck rather than pipelines in the north, these factors can all have a very direct effect on local gasoline prices.

Now, the NDP is fond of suggesting that regulating Ontario's gas prices will help prevent these kinds of

fluctuations. In fact, provinces that have regulated prices historically tend to have comparable or even higher prices than Ontario. And as I said earlier, their prices are also affected by global factors outside of provincial control, proving that regulation does not necessarily protect consumers from rising prices.

I want to emphasize here that Ontario's competitive gasoline market as a whole is functioning quite well. In Ontario, we're lucky that consumers can benefit from a competitive market, which is not the case in provinces with minimum retail margins. As always, our government continues to regularly monitor gasoline supply and prices on an ongoing basis to ensure that this system is working for all Ontarians.

However, since the third party is giving me the opportunity to respond tonight, I think it's important that I take the time to talk about how our government has continued to be a strong champion for northern Ontario. Thanks to the advocacy of our members, whether it's the member for Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Thunder Bay–Superior North or Sudbury, the north continues to be very well represented at Queen's Park.

As a government, we wholeheartedly appreciate how unique the north is as a region. That is why we continue to make record investments in northern Ontario. It is, after all, our government that's created more than 27,500 quality jobs in the north. It's our government that has supported over 7,000 projects through a \$1.1-billion investment in the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. In addition, we've invested \$25 billion into provincial highways since 2003. That includes \$550 million committed this year alone in northern repair and expansion projects.

I know that there was great excitement in northeastern Ontario in January 2016. The investment that I'll be talking about is in an area I know well. I visit Grundy provincial park every summer to camp with my family in the Key River and French River area.

In January, the transportation minister announced \$173 million, which is actually the largest investment by MTO, to continue the four-laning of Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound, the area between Key River and French River. What they're looking at is an additional 15 kilometres of four-laning. It includes 10 bridges, two interchanges and a number of other investments that they need to make in that particular area that will certainly help the fishermen, the tourists and also those who are trying to commute from the southern to the northern area.

I remember a time when the investments in Ontario weren't what they are now, and the north certainly didn't fare well until 2003, when our government took over to continue the investments. We're trying to create one Ontario. As Premier Kathleen Wynne has said on many occasions, we will continue to invest in northern infrastructure, whether it's in highways, roads, bridges, hospitals, water or waste water systems, through our ambitious \$160 billion worth of infrastructure plans. So while the NDP can pontificate and play politics, our government takes strong action to ensure that we have investments in the north.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1812.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac
Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Scarborough–Rouge River	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith, Monique Taylor
Glenn Thibeault
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yvan Baker
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Toby Barrett, Han Dong
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Peter Z. Milczyn
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Lisa Gretzky, Ann Hoggarth
Harinder Malhi, Jim McDonell
Eleanor McMahon, Lou Rinaldi
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Cristina Martins
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
Robert Bailey, Wayne Gates
Monte Kwinter, Marie-France Lalonde
Amrit Mangat, Cristina Martins
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Randy Hillier, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Laurie Scott
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Steve Clark
Granville Anderson, Robert Bailey
Steve Clark, Vic Dhillon
Sophie Kiwala, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahon, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Chris Ballard, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Joe Dickson, Jennifer K. French
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Lorne Coe
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Marie-France Lalonde, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Continued from back cover

Child protection

Miss Monique Taylor	9020
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	9020

Public transit

Ms. Daiene Vernile	9021
Hon. Steven Del Duca	9021

Climate change

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	9022
Hon. Glen R. Murray	9022
Mr. Toby Barrett	9022
Hon. Jeff Leal	9022

Correction of record

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	9022
------------------------------	------

Birth of member's grandchild

Mrs. Cristina Martins	9022
-----------------------------	------

Legislative interns

Hon. Eric Hoskins	9022
-------------------------	------

Visitors

Miss Monique Taylor	9022
---------------------------	------

Legislative pages

Mr. Arthur Potts	9023
------------------------	------

Special Olympics athletes

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	9023
-------------------------------------	------

Display of fire helmet

Mr. Wayne Gates	9023
-----------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn	9023
Mr. Jeff Yurek	9023

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Mental health services

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	9023
----------------------------	------

Niagara-on-the-Lake fire department

Mr. Wayne Gates	9023
-----------------------	------

Streetsville Village Litter Blitz

Mr. Bob Delaney	9024
-----------------------	------

Polish Constitution Day

Mr. Jeff Yurek	9024
----------------------	------

Public transit

Ms. Peggy Sattler	9024
-------------------------	------

Hospice care

Mr. John Fraser	9024
-----------------------	------

Hydro rates

Mr. Steve Clark	9025
-----------------------	------

Volunteer service awards

Mr. Monte Kwinter	9025
-------------------------	------

Polish Constitution Day

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn	9025
----------------------------	------

Visitor

Hon. Yasir Naqvi	9025
------------------------	------

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Government Agencies

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	9026
Report deemed adopted	9026

MOTIONS

Private members' public business

Hon. Yasir Naqvi	9026
Motion agreed to	9026

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Probation and parole officers / Agents de probation et de libération conditionnelle

Hon. Yasir Naqvi	9026
------------------------	------

Correctional services staff

Hon. Yasir Naqvi	9027
------------------------	------

Correctional services staff

Mr. Rick Nicholls	9028
-------------------------	------

Probation and parole officers

Mr. Rick Nicholls	9028
-------------------------	------

Correctional services staff / Probation and parole officers

Ms. Jennifer K. French	9028
------------------------------	------

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Health care funding

Mr. Rick Nicholls	9029
-------------------------	------

Post-traumatic stress disorder

Ms. Jennifer K. French	9030
------------------------------	------

Hydro rates

Mr. Ted Arnott	9030
----------------------	------

Ontario Northland Transportation Commission

Mr. John Vanthof	9030
------------------------	------

Long-term care

Mr. Steve Clark	9031
-----------------------	------

Privatization of public assets

Mr. Wayne Gates	9031
-----------------------	------

Privatization of public assets	
Mr. Bill Walker	9031
Autism treatment	
Mme France G��linas	9031
Health care funding	
Mr. John Yakabuski	9031
Prix de l'essence	
M. Michael Mantha	9032
Environmental protection	
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	9032
Hospital funding	
Mme France G��linas	9032
Automotive dealers	
Mr. Steve Clark	9032

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Alternative Financial Services Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016, Bill 156, Mr. Orazietti / Loi de 2016 modifiant des lois concernant les services financiers de rechange, projet de loi 156, M. Orazietti	
Hon. Michael Coteau	9033
Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris	9034
Hon. Dipika Damerla	9034
Hon. Glen R. Murray	9035
Mr. John Yakabuski	9035
Ms. Peggy Sattler	9036
Hon. Michael Gravelle	9036
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	9036
Hon. Glen R. Murray	9037
Mr. Bill Walker	9037

Mme France G��linas	9041
Hon. James J. Bradley	9041
Mr. Steve Clark	9041
Ms. Peggy Sattler	9042
Mr. Bill Walker	9042
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	9042
Mr. Chris Ballard	9044
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	9044
Mme France G��linas	9045
Mr. Grant Crack	9045
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	9045
Mr. John Yakabuski	9046
Mr. John Vanthof	9047
Hon. Mario Sergio	9047
Mr. Steve Clark	9048
Mme France G��linas	9048
Mr. John Yakabuski	9048
Mme France G��linas	9049
Mr. Chris Ballard	9050
Mr. Jeff Yurek	9050
M. Gilles Bisson	9050
Hon. Mario Sergio	9051
Mme France G��linas	9051
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	9051

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE / D  BAT SUR LA MOTION D'AJOURNEMENT

Gasoline prices	
Mr. Gilles Bisson	9051
Mrs. Kathryn McGarry	9052

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 3 May 2016 / Mardi 3 mai 2016

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act (Strengthening Retirement Security for Ontarians), 2016, Bill 186, Ms. Hunter / Loi de 2016 sur le Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario (sécuriser la retraite en Ontario), projet de loi 186, Mme Hunter	
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	8997
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	8998
Mr. Michael Mantha	9000
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	9000
Ms. Laurie Scott	9000
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	9001
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	9001
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	9002
Mr. Bob Delaney	9004
Mr. Steve Clark	9005
Ms. Jennifer K. French	9005
Hon. Dipika Damerla	9005
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	9006
Mr. John Yakabuski	9006
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	9007

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Michael Coteau	9007
Mr. Han Dong	9007
Mr. Granville Anderson	9008
Mr. Patrick Brown	9008
Mr. Shafiq Qadri	9008
Hon. Michael Gravelle	9008
Hon. Mitzie Hunter	9008
Mr. Victor Fedeli	9008
Mr. Arthur Potts	9008
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	9008
Hon. Steven Del Duca	9008
Hon. David Orazietti	9008
Hon. Liz Sandals	9008
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	9008
Mr. Ted Arnott	9008
Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	9008
Mme France Gélinas	9008
Ms. Soo Wong	9008
Hon. Charles Sousa	9008
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	9008

Legislative pages

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	9008
-------------------------------------	------

Visitors

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	9009
Joan Fawcett	
Mr. Todd Smith	9009
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	9010
Mr. Lou Rinaldi	9010
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	9012

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Nuclear energy

Mr. Patrick Brown	9012
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	9012

Autism treatment

Mr. Patrick Brown	9013
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	9013
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	9014

Electoral reform

Ms. Andrea Horwath	9014
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	9014

Health care funding

Ms. Andrea Horwath	9015
Hon. Eric Hoskins	9015

Child Protection Information Network

Ms. Sylvia Jones	9016
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	9016

Social Assistance Management System

Ms. Catherine Fife	9016
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	9017

Children and youth mental health services

Ms. Sophie Kiwala	9017
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	9017

Social Assistance Management System

Mr. Randy Pettapiece	9018
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	9018

Labour dispute

Ms. Cheri DiNovo	9018
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	9018

Education funding

Mrs. Cristina Martins	9019
Hon. Liz Sandals	9019

Autism treatment

Mr. Norm Miller	9020
Hon. Eric Hoskins	9020

Continued on inside back cover

No. 168



N° 168

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

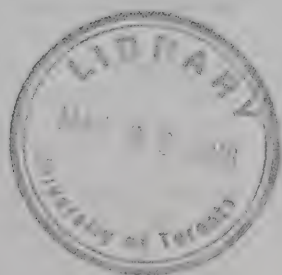
Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 4 May 2016

Mercredi 4 mai 2016



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 416-325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 416-325-3708.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 4 May 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 4 mai 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Orders of the day.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, government notice of motion number 65.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin—Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I don't believe we have a quorum, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A quorum count, please.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a quorum.

The government House leader.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 186, An Act to establish the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy; and

That the Standing Committee on Social Policy be authorized to meet at its regularly scheduled times on Monday, May 16, 2016, and Tuesday, May 17, 2016, for the purpose of public hearings on the bill; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 186:

—Notice of public hearings on the Ontario Parliamentary Channel, the Legislative Assembly's website and Canada NewsWire; and

—That the deadline for requests to appear be 1 p.m. on Thursday, May 12, 2016; and

—That witnesses be scheduled to appear before the committee on a first-come, first-served basis; and

—That each witness will receive up to five minutes for their presentation followed by nine minutes for questions from committee members; and

—That the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Tuesday, May 17, 2016; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 12 noon on Thursday, May 19, 2016; and

That the committee be authorized to meet at its regularly scheduled times on Monday, May 30, 2016, and Tuesday, May 31, 2016, for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill;

On Tuesday, May 31, 2016, at 4 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Wednesday, June 1, 2016. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Social Policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, two hours of debate shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

The votes on second and third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi moves that pursuant—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? I heard a no.

"I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding"—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispensed.
Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, thank you for acknowledging me to speak on this motion as it relates to Bill 186. I've had the opportunity to speak on this important bill. This is a necessary piece of legislation that will help close the retirement savings gap for the two thirds of Ontario employees who do not have a workplace pension plan.

This gap is even worse for younger people. Three quarters of Ontario workers aged 25 to 34 do not have a workplace pension plan. Speaker, that's something I can speak to, not that I'm not in that language, but I started my working life, obviously, in that age group and I've never had a workplace pension plan. I know that for a lot of people within my circle of friends this is a very active conversation as to the retirement income security of individuals who work extremely hard, and we know that CPP is not sufficient.

That's why our government made the Ontario Retirement Pension plan, or ORPP, one of the pillars of our economic plan. We believe that every worker deserves to have a secure retirement. Bill 186 enshrines the key plan design details of the ORPP in legislation. This bill also provides employers and employees with the time and the clarity they need to prepare for the launch of the ORPP, with enrolment starting in January 2017, and the collection of contributions phased in starting January 1, 2018.

Passing this bill will bring us one step closer to our government's goal that all Ontario workers are either enrolled in the ORPP or in a comparable workplace pension plan by 2020.

Speaker, as I'm sure you are aware, the government has carried out extensive consultations on the ORPP. In 2014, the Associate Minister of Finance led a province-wide consultation to provide an overview of the government's plan to enhance retirement security. This included 13 consultations; visits to over 10 communities; engaging with businesses, associations, non-profit organizations, labour, individuals and families; and, in addition, speaking with hundreds of Ontarians.

In 2015, the Associate Minister of Finance led a second province-wide consultation to discuss the plan. That particular consultation included 15 consultations; visits to over 12 communities, including northern, rural and urban communities; engaging with businesses, associations, the self-employed, young professionals, social advocates, non-profit organizations, labour, individuals and families; and speaking with hundreds of Ontarians.

Speaker, I can personally attest, because I know that the minister came to my community in Ottawa on several occasions holding these meetings and consultations, and they were very well attended, with diverse perspectives being presented from my community of Ottawa Centre, of course, and the city of Ottawa that I live in.

Speaker, the ministry has also received over 1,000 written submissions to the ORPP consultation.

This is the third piece of legislation related to the ORPP that our government has introduced. The first was Bill 56, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, which went through the Standing Committee on Social Policy, where we heard from 40 deputants.

The second bill, Bill 91, the Building Ontario Up Act, which established the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Administration Corp., went through the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and heard from over 50 deputants.

Now, there's this particular bill, Bill 186, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, which this House has debated for over seven hours already.

Speaker, it's important that we move forward with Bill 186 and bring it before the committee. In the last Parliament, this Legislature was ground to a halt and was unable to move forward. Only 39% of government bills were passed in the last minority government, unfortunately, compared to more than three quarters of bills that were passed going back to 1990.

0910

The voters of Ontario sent a clear message in 2014, no ifs and buts about it: They want our government to provide Ontario workers with a predictable stream of income paid for life in retirement. We cannot afford to have the opposition recklessly hold up this important piece of legislation with procedural trickery and needless filibustering. We need to move this legislation forward in a timely manner so that employers can prepare for the launch of the ORPP.

It is time that we end second reading and refer the bill to committee. In committee, of course, stakeholders will present their views. We will be able to hear directly from the public on their thoughts on this bill, as we've been doing through the consultation process and, of course, the consultation in committee on the last two bills as well. Also, as we all know, committee members will have an opportunity to move amendments to the bill as well.

At the same time, Speaker, this House can move to substantive debate on other very important matters. There are a number of important pieces of legislation that have already been introduced, which the government would like to debate in the House and move through the legislative process; for example, Bill 119, which is the Health Information Protection Act; Bill 135, which is the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act; Bill 156, which is the Alternative Financial Services Statute Law Amendment Act; and, very important, Bill 172, which is the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act.

Speaker, we would like to spend time debating some of the other important pieces of legislation currently before the House; we cannot wait until Bill 186 is dealt with. That is why I have moved this motion. I urge all members to support this motion. Bill 186 is a very important piece of legislation. It succeeds two other pieces of legislation and completes the work of establishing the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, which is going to be a

cornerstone ensuring that we have retirement income security for Ontarians, especially young Ontarians, so that for the hard work they do they are able to save money and will be able to live with safety and security in their retirement. Of course, Speaker, that is a huge boon to our economy as well, because when people retire and have a predictable income, that money is invested back in our local economy, which is also very important.

Speaker, I end my debate now and urge all members to support this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: This government is yet again shutting down debate in the Legislature to, I would say, ram something through. It's nearly getting to the point where I can start each of my speeches this way. It appears that the ORPP 'scheme-boat' is moving full speed ahead. A lot of people are really wondering why the Ontario Liberals want to rush this thing through the House without more debate. When looking over the timeline of events that led to this point, it's not the first questionable act by the government when it comes to this issue.

How did it all begin in the first place? Well, I'm glad you asked that question, Mr. Speaker. Years ago, the Premier said she needed to create her own pension scheme because Ottawa was refusing to expand the Canada Pension Plan. Perhaps if she had tried to offer a handshake instead of throwing elbows, there would have been more co-operation between levels of government. She reiterated this last year while taking time away from her office to campaign for candidates at another level of government, starkly breaking away from the long-standing tradition of Premiers staying objective during elections and focusing on governing.

The Premier stated that the only reason the province needed the ORPP was because Prime Minister Stephen Harper would not expand the Canada Pension Plan. She then said that if people voted for Justin Trudeau's Liberals, she wouldn't need to implement a costly duplicate program here in Ontario, because she would finally have a partner she was willing to try to work with. That was the Premier's argument on October 13 last year; the dates matter because it is difficult to keep up with flip-flops.

On October 13, 2015, an article appeared in the *National Post* with the following headline: "Wynne Says Ontario Would Drop Pension Plan if a Federal Liberal Government Expands CPP." The article explains the Premier's now-abandoned position:

"Wynne says she couldn't convince the Harper government to enhance the Canada Pension Plan, so her government introduced an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan that would mirror the CPP, essentially doubling deductions and benefits.

"She says if Trudeau wins the Oct. 19 federal election and is willing to improve the CPP, that would be 'the solution' to her concerns...."

Well, the Liberals won the election, so there should be no reason now for the redundant ORPP scheme to be implemented, right? Wrong. Well, not so fast. It turns out

that the Premier quickly reversed this position as soon as the election was over. Isn't that convenient?

A little over a month later, the Premier clarified her comments by saying she actually meant the exact opposite of what she said before the election. The Liberals then made the questionable claim that they could simply roll the redundant ORPP into the CPP later. That certainly sounds quite complicated and costly, but the Liberals said it is so, so it must be true. But is that accurate?

On January 13, a *National Post* article threw doubt on such a complicated plan. The headline stated, "Despite What the Premier Says, Ontario's Pension Plan Can't Simply Be Rolled into an Expanded CPP." Mike Moffat, an assistant professor of economics at the Richard Ivey School of Business in London, stated, "I'm not entirely sure how they would pull that off, because they're quite a bit different." He goes on to say, "Let's say this thing exists for three or four or five years, and then to fold it back into CPP, I'm not sure how that would work, to be quite honest." The professor went on to say that while rolling the ORPP into the CPP could technically be done, the cost of doing this would be astronomical. That's another alarm bell ringing loud and clear.

With citizens seeing alarming trends from this government such as fundraising quotas being placed on ministers of the crown and billions of dollars handed out to secret Liberal friends with no public records of who got the money or how many jobs it created, they start to ask pretty tough questions about potential corruption.

Now Premier Wynne wants to reach into your pocket to pull out money for her pension plan. It kind of reminds me of a commercial I used to see a long time ago: Hands in my Pockets. Well, you know what? She wants to reach into your pocket and pull out money for her pension scheme, after she herself said that the only reason for the scheme was that Prime Minister Harper would not expand CPP and that she would drop the redundant program if the Liberals were elected. Well, the ground the Premier stood on to argue for the ORPP disappeared from under her feet, but she plowed ahead anyway.

Does anyone in Ontario actually trust the Premier with their pension money? Why do we need to set up an entirely new program with its own administrative costs to do something the federal government already does successfully? Why is the Ontario Liberal government so obsessed with getting our pension dollars in their hands? I have a few thoughts on that, but I may be asked to withdraw so I won't say them.

There is intense resistance to the Wynne Liberal pension scheme right across the political spectrum from—get this—the Fraser Institute to CUPE. When was the last time they agreed on anything? That ought to send a clear message to the government: Nobody, other than the Ontario Liberals, thinks that the ORPP is the way to go.

Is it because their focus isn't really on retirement security and pensions at all? Any program of this size has the potential to make those who are tasked with running it a lot of money. A line in the recent budget stated that through the ORPP "new pools of capital would be avail-

able for Ontario-based projects.” If you’re a fisherman, something smells fishy here.

One wonders why a government that handed out \$163 million to its biggest donor would want to spend pension money on things other than pensions. The ORPP bill, as it’s written, leaves a massive loophole for pension funds to be spent on a wide variety of different things. The pension administration corporation, which will be appointed by the Liberals, would be left to determine where to spend the money for “the benefit of members and other beneficiaries.” Would those “other beneficiaries” be friends of the Wynne Liberals in the private sector?

We’ve seen incredibly worrisome acts from the Liberal government, but they have increased dramatically after this Premier came to power. They’re giving government grants to friends and generous donors off the public record. There’s also the curious trend of Ontario Liberals becoming filthy rich once they leave Queen’s Park, free to negotiate secret, million-dollar deals with the government they just worked for. That is why a public inquiry is needed to restore trust in the public that its government is not becoming a for-profit business.

0920

Now the Wynne Liberals want to set up another massive pool of money to play in. They say it’s for pensions, but it can actually be spent on other things. By the way, this is a government that is currently facing—count them—five OPP investigations.

Interjection: How many?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Five OPP investigations. The OPP anti-rackets branch may have to set up a satellite office at Queen’s Park.

The public simply doesn’t trust the Ontario Liberals with their money and certainly not their pensions. Instead of setting up an unnecessary, costly and redundant pension scheme, the Premier should keep the original promise she made before the federal election and simply ask for the CPP to be expanded. No more flip-flopping. In this case, if she flip-flops and she has to do a backflip, it would be called a flop-flip.

We’re being asked to support a program with unknown costs and unknown benefits, and the very reason for this program in the first place no longer exists. What’s worse, we’re now being told that we cannot ask any more questions or raise any other criticisms of this redundant and expensive pension plan scheme here in the Legislature. Once again, the Ontario Liberals are running from a debate.

Mr. Speaker, I know you’ll be happy to hear this: If elected, Patrick Brown and the PCs would remove and refund the redundant ORPP and ensure that no more taxpayer dollars end up in the pockets of friends of the Ontario Liberals who are becoming filthy rich while the rest of the province tries to keep up with the rising cost of living in the Wynne Liberals’ Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have to say, I’m not pleased to be participating in yet another time allocation debate. This

government uses time allocation like nobody’s business, as they say.

I want to ask the question to the House: What are they afraid of? Are they afraid to have debate on a bill that they feel proud about? There is a right of members to be able to express their views for or against a particular initiative of this Legislature.

It is clear in the Legislature that the Liberals’ ORPP is somewhat supported by New Democrats. We’re in favour of the principle. We think there are some changes that need to be made because there are some exclusions; I’ll let other people speak to that. But the other party here, the Conservative Party, have, in their view, legitimate issues that they feel need to be put on the record in order to deal with what they see is a plan that they can’t support. I don’t understand why a government is afraid to hear from an opposition party, in this case the Conservatives, speaking against their initiative. If the initiative is so good, their arguments will prevail and the public will support them; if the Tory arguments are bad, it actually works against the Tories.

I don’t understand politically, first of all, why they wouldn’t allow debate, but the more important question is: This place is supposed to be about making sure that the voices of everyone in this Legislature are heard. These are all representatives of the people. We all ran and got elected in our individual ridings as New Democrats, Conservatives or Liberals to represent the people in our constituencies and, yes, to represent our political views of our own political philosophy as New Democrats, Conservatives or Liberals. When a member of this assembly who is duly elected by the public doesn’t have an ability to be heard because the government decides by fiat that it’s going to truncate a debate by way of time allocation, I think it’s an affront to our democracy and, quite frankly, an affront to this institution.

The Legislature, until 1992, didn’t have time allocation. The only thing you were able to do was to call the question, and the threshold by which you were allowed to call the question and it being called was a lot higher than it is now. Now, because there’s time allocation in the standing orders after seven and a half hours, calling the question probably only needs about eight or nine hours for the question to be called. There was a time that there wasn’t any time allocation and the threshold for calling the question was much higher. And guess what happened? The political parties actually had to work together. Why? Because the government of the day, whoever it might be, wanted to pass a particular initiative, whatever it was, an opposition party or two opposition parties may be opposed, and then you picked your fights. You fought on the things that you really cared about and then you traded off on the other things that you could support and then you would get something in exchange.

For an example, in this particular fight that the Conservatives are having on the ORPP, they may have demanded, “Listen, we want more hearings. We want an ability for the bill to travel.” Well, how is that a bad thing for the people we represent, number one? I don’t see it as a bad thing. I see it as a service to democracy.

How is it bad for the government—if they have an initiative that they think is good and is worthy of support, well, then, you should be okay with travelling your own bill and having the opposition speak against it; it'll serve your political need.

The only reason that they do time allocation now is because, quite frankly, the government has gotten lazy. It's gotten lazy with democracy. It's gotten lazy in having to listen to the voices of the duly elected members. It's gotten lazy in having to listen to the people who want to say something on this, who want to come to our committees to be heard. As you know, Mr. Speaker, once this bill is finished second reading, it is ordered to committee. And when it's in committee and if there isn't time allocation—in the old days, you would travel the bill somewhere in Ontario so people could be heard. Imagine that. Imagine a Legislature that allows the people to be heard: Oh, my God, how awful that would be.

That's what the government is saying by way of this motion. They're saying that giving members the ability to use their voice in the Legislature, which they were democratically elected to do, shouldn't be done; and they're saying the people who want to speak to this particular bill in committee, at either Toronto or other places in Ontario as the committee travels, don't have to be heard. And I say, shame on the government House leader, shame on the Premier, and shame on the government for utilizing time allocation.

There are bills in this House—and if you look at this order paper, Mr. Speaker, it's a pretty thin order paper. This isn't a prop; this is our order paper. And if you look at the order paper, it's pretty thin. There's not a lot of legislation left. Why? Because, quite frankly, the opposition has agreed with quite a few of the bills that the government has put forward. We've raised some concerns, we've allowed the bills to go to committee, and then we make changes.

But every now and then, there comes a bill where there's a more principled view on the part of the party for or against the bill. For the Tories on the ORPP—and I don't agree with them, by the way; I think the position the Conservatives are taking on the ORPP is wrong. I believe that people should have pensions and I'll speak to that in a second. They have an obligation to do what they think is right as Conservatives and as representatives of the people of their ridings. They have a right to be able to stand in this Legislature to be heard. When a government shuts them down because it's decided by fiat, by order of the Premier's office, utilizing the government House leader's office to bring a motion to censure the opposition, I say it's a bad thing.

Now, do most people out in Ontario care? Probably not. My good friend Mr. Hillier, from the riding of—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Lanark—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Lanark—Renfrew?

Mr. Randy Hillier: —Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I can never remember all that stuff. That's why, Mr. Speaker, I could never be the Speaker; I would never remember all the names.

But my point is that the members have a right to be heard and they need to be heard. That's the first point.

I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, in case you're wondering, New Democrats will not be supporting the time allocation motion, even though we support the bill, on the principle that members should be heard and the public should be heard. This is what this institution is all about.

As far as the idea of the ORPP, I think there are things that the government could have done differently, but the general principle of providing a pension for workers and others in this province to be able to retire with some dignity—because we know now the Canada Pension Plan and the old age pension plan aren't going to cut it for most seniors today. If you're 65 years old and you retire and the only thing you have is the old age pension and CPP, it's going to be a pretty thin budget you live on. It's doable; there are all kinds of people who do it, but it's a pretty difficult thing to do.

The principle of trying to create another CPP-style plan I think is a good thing. In fact, our party put forward that initiative a number of times and, Mr. Speaker, if I remember correctly—and correct me if I'm wrong—you were a critic for our party who brought forward such a plan as well. So we, as New Democrats, think it's a good idea, because we shouldn't be in a situation in this province that people work all their lives and find themselves in a situation of not being able to afford to retire.

0930

We go back to our communities, all of us, as we do every weekend, and how many people do we see of retirement age are back to work, working as a greeter at Walmart, working at the Home Depot, working in the service industry somewhere? They're doing that because they can't afford to retire. I think that's sad because those are people taking the jobs of younger people who would need those jobs at the entry-level positions. What are we really doing here by not allowing people to have an adequate income for retirement?

Is the ORPP going to be the blessed answer that's going to allow everybody to retire in dignity? Probably not. It's a step forward, absolutely; I give that full credit. But it's not going to give us everything that we need.

I'll use us, as members, as an example. I have this little test. Most people think that members have got a pension. I want to let members know we don't have a pension here, okay?

Interjection: What?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I know it's a surprise to the public, the people you serve in your constituencies. I don't know how many times I go to an event and they say, "Oh, yeah, but you've got a big fat pension in the Legislature." I've got zilch.

I have RRSPs that are contributed by both myself and by my employer, the Legislature of Ontario. Here's a stark fact: I've been here for 27 years, Mr. Speaker, and I couldn't afford to retire on the RRSPs I've got. Why? Because of the whims of the market; it's not enough.

A defined pension plan is always better. You look at the people who work in this building. I look at our staff

who are here today, the Sergeant-at-Arms and the Clerks. God bless them; they work hard and they are good at what they do. They get a pension in this place: 2% per year. Good for them, and I applaud that. Two per cent for every year of service of their salary up to a certain maximum, whatever that calculation is. Rightfully so, when they get to a certain age, they can afford to retire with some dignity.

We make a good income, members here. What's a base salary, \$120,000?

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's \$116,000. Oh my God, sorry. They all barked back at me. Okay, all right, I make a little bit more than that as House leader. But \$116,000 is a base salary.

My point is this: \$116,000 in our constituencies is a lot of money. There are not a lot of people where I come from who make \$116,000 outside of some certain jobs in the mining industry and others in trades and stuff that are—

Mr. Randy Hillier: School principals.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Even they don't make that. Anyways, that's a whole other story.

My point is, even with people at the income level that we have, I would love to make the following survey: How many members here can afford to retire on their RRSPs today? Please put up your hand. There's not one because you can't.

The RRSP system is not an adequate pension for people to be able to retire on. The amount of money you would have to put into an RRSP would be somewhat equal to what you would have to put into a defined pension plan. It's the only way. Plus, the problem is that once you're into an RRSP, you're at the whim of the market.

I've gone through three major corrections, as they call them, where I've lost a shitload of money. Pardon me, Speaker. I want to withdraw that comment. I feel so badly about those losses that it overwhelmed me. But the point is, as anybody who is in the market today will know, if they've been in for any while, there have been three major corrections. Essentially, what it's done is taken away whatever gains we've made. I have looked at the amount of money that I've put in my RRSPs over the 20-some-odd years that I've been here. I essentially have the same amount of money that I put in. That's pretty well what it comes down to.

I think the stock market is rigged. It's rigged for the people at the top to take the money out of pockets of people like me. Every now and then, they give me a nice return of 10% or 15% or even 20% in some year, but then they give you a market correction in order to take that all back, and you end up probably making 2% to 3% overall in a period of 20 or 25 years. You probably average over the whole thing about 2% to 3%. It's not a heck of a lot of money.

At least, in a defined pension plan, people know how much they're going to retire on. The employer puts in, generally, 10%; the employee puts in 10%. It's invested by way of large amounts of money. If you look at the

Teachers' Pension Plan and others, they're doing quite well. What happens is when the person goes to retire, you know what you're going to get. It's a defined benefit. You know how much you're going to get every month, and you can get on with your life and you can figure out what you're going to do in your retirement. That's what we're trying to do here with the ORPP—not as much as we need, but to give people a little bit more security of income.

I'm just saying to my friends in the Conservative Party that I disagree with your position. I don't think standing in the way of the ORPP is a wise thing, in my view, but you're entitled to yours and I will not impugn motive or say that you have to look at it my way, because this is a democracy. We have different ways of looking at it.

But what New Democrats want to respect is the ability in this case for the Conservative members to have their say. Utilizing a time allocation motion to shut down debate on something that they feel strongly about is not only an affront to them as individuals, but it's also an affront to the people that they represent in their constituencies, because this Legislature is about letting the voices be heard. They represent people in this assembly, as I do and other members of the assembly do. We have different points of view, but they need to be heard. If you're not going to allow it—I don't mean you, Mr. Speaker, because you're not the one who brought the time allocation. But if the government is going to bring time allocation as a way of shutting down the voices, I think it's a disservice not only to the members who are being affected, but I think it's a disservice to the process of this Legislature and it's a disservice to the people of Ontario and the democracy we're here to enact.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity to weigh in on yet again another time allocation. Basically, what that means is that they're limiting the debate. They don't want us to talk any longer about the ORPP. You have to ask yourself why. Why do they not want us talking about the ORPP? What is it that they don't want the people to hear?

I'll go once again, as I do many times in this Legislature, to the gas plant scandal hearing documents. Those 300,000 pages were a treasure trove, an inside look into the thinking of this Liberal government. Back during the gas plant scandal, we actually obtained confidential internal documents. One document was entitled Confidential Advice to Cabinet—Not Recommended. This was a document that warned the newly—at that time—appointed Premier that the province will lose 18,000 jobs for every \$2 billion collected under this pension tax. As this is now a \$6-billion plan, that's 54,000 job losses, and this government knew that. They knew that they would jeopardize 54,000 jobs and they implemented this anyway.

The government was told in this confidential document that the long-term behavioural impact of this tax would be lower business investment, relocation of businesses to other jurisdictions, reduced work effort and an

out-migration of people. In fact, of all the revenue tools the government was considering, the payroll tax had the largest negative impact.

Mr. Han Dong: It's not a tax.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's not a tax? Speaker, I hear from the other side that it's not a tax. With all the taxes this Liberal government had brought on, you would think they would actually know what a tax was by now.

The government also commissioned EKOS, a prominent public affairs and polling company, to assess the impact of the ORPP. They found that 54% of businesses are considering a hiring freeze—this is the government's own research that they conducted—and two thirds of businesses would make operating cuts. Speaker, this is their own research. Large businesses would consider layoffs as well as cancelling existing pension plans. This is what they were told through their own research. Small businesses told them that they would redefine employees from full-time to contract workers to avoid the ORPP. In total, they were told 60% of businesses expect to be hurt by the ORPP. This information only came to light because the Canadian Taxpayers Federation filed a freedom of information request. In fact, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation concluded, "It's remarkable the Ontario government didn't walk away from the ORPP when they saw this research. The ORPP is being sold as a benefit to Ontario employees, when in reality it will mean many of them will end up worse off."

0940

Further, the government decided to do additional research and they did a cost-benefit analysis that was performed by the Conference Board of Canada. Again, this was commissioned by the government's Ministry of Finance. In this report, it admitted it will take 20 years before the economy recovers from the shock of the ORPP. They calculated and told their client—the government of Ontario—the job losses, in their estimation, will peak at 23,000 in 2023. Real disposable income and consumption spending will remain lower until 2040. This will lead to a fall in real private investment that peaks at \$939 million—so almost a billion dollars lost—and that will peak in 2024.

And when does the report say the good news kicks in? Well, that, Speaker, will be 2093. This will kick in in 75 years. Go for it. It'll kick in then. That's the government's own research. That's why they don't want us here debating this new tax. This is exactly why they don't want us debating their new tax.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business stated in their pre-budget submission that the ORPP would lead to a loss of 160,000 person-years of employment. They also noted that 90% of their members do not support the ORPP; that's up from 86% last year. Some 69% of their members say they'll freeze or cut salaries; 53% said they would cut jobs if the ORPP goes ahead. They concluded the ORPP tax will significantly undermine the competitiveness of Ontario businesses.

This is what the government is being told. This is why they don't want us any longer, after today, to be debating this new tax.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce presented a letter to the government opposing the ORPP. They urged the government to expand the definition of "comparable plans" and exempt many of the businesses from participating. It was signed by 150 of Ontario's key stakeholders. This included Magna, Chrysler, Ford, GM, Canadian Tire, GE, Walmart, Maple Leaf Foods—the list goes on and on. They were joined by 57 of Ontario's local chambers of commerce and many associations throughout Ontario, all telling the government of Ontario that only 26% of their members can afford the increased cost of the ORPP and 44% of its members will reduce employees or hire fewer staff.

The key to remember is that it's impossible to save for retirement if you don't have a job, and every one of these organizations is telling the government that jobs will be cut. They will actually achieve the opposite of what they're trying to do here.

Over the summer, the chairman of Fiat Chrysler, Sergio Marchionne, talked about how Ontario is becoming the most expensive jurisdiction in which to do business. He's talking North America-wide now. He's talking about our skyrocketing hydro rates. He specifically brought up the ORPP. This is what's happening. He also talked about the fact that because there will be job losses from this, there will be fewer people in a position to buy the cars he makes. This has got a downward spiral effect that is going to hurt families right across Ontario.

The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, another group—with 750,000 employees—talked about how this ORPP tax will lead to more layoffs and wage freezes. A survey of their members says as many as 35% will lay off staff to cope with the additional costs associated with the ORPP tax. About 68% said they would eliminate wage increases or bonuses to pay for those additional costs.

I can tell you, Speaker, when I was in London, Ontario, a little while ago, there was a businessperson there and we were talking about the cost of doing business in Ontario. What he told our group was that he's got 15 employees, and he plans on firing one of them to use that salary to pay for his share of the other 14 ORPPs. And he knows his employees are not going to want to take a 1.9% reduction, because, don't forget, this is not a government pension. This is not the government giving you a pension. This is your money; 1.9% of your salary, \$1,643 every year, will come off your paycheque, and your employer must kick in the same amount. What he said is that he's going to fire one employee and use that salary to pay for not only his share, but likely he'll end up paying for his employees' share as well, because they're not going to want to take a haircut on their paycheque. That's anecdotally what's happening right across Ontario. That's why all these companies are saying they're going to have layoffs: because they need that money to pay for the additional costs coming from the ORPP.

There's lots of talk about whether this is actually yet another cash grab under the guise of infrastructure. Right from day one, we understood. If you look at a letter to the editor from the Associate Minister of Finance, Mitzie

Hunter—I was so disturbed at her letter to the editor that I sent a follow-up letter to the *Globe and Mail* last July, and I'll read it to you.

It says, "I was disturbed with the letter to the editor from Ontario's associate finance minister, Mitzie Hunter. Referring to the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, she states, 'The government will not determine where and how contributions are invested and that the government is establishing an independent body to manage and administer the ORPP.' That is not what the government told the Legislature. In the 2014 budget, it states, 'By unlocking value from assets and encouraging more Ontarians to save through the new ORPP, new pools of capital would be available for projects such as roads, bridges and transit.'"

I'm offended because what was presented to us in the Legislature is the complete opposite of what the public was being told, and that's another reason why they want to shut down debate: because they don't want us disclosing all of these things that are contrary to what we're being told.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's always a pleasure to be able to stand in this House and speak on important issues before us and the matters of the day. I guess in this case we're talking about time allocation. It's Bill 186, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, that has been time-allocated. It is an interesting piece of legislation. It's like a chameleon: It keeps changing, not in colour but in shape and in wording. The time allocation of the bill is certainly a major change in it.

Before I get into that, allow me to state at the outset that we in the New Democratic Party, the progressive opposition in the House, believe passionately that everyone in Ontario deserves to retire with dignity. Everyone in Ontario deserves to share in the benefits of an Ontario public pension plan. We believe in retirement security for everyone. We do not believe in time-allocating this bill.

We in the NDP want people to be able to count on predictable and fair benefits when they retire. We do not believe in time allocation.

Allow me, if you will, Speaker, to take a very short detour for a moment. Last week, Gale and I welcomed our fifth grandchild.

Applause.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you. Clarity Athena Sage joins her sister Katana and her cousins Paisley, Arwen and Fletcher. Paisley is five; she's the oldest. Arwen is three, Katana is two, Fletcher is a year and a half, and now our little peanut, Clarity, who weighed in at five pounds and 10 ounces—very, very small. I mention my grandchildren not just because I'm a proud grandparent but because eventually this time-allocated proposed legislation, one would hope, would be to their benefit. I also mention them because, to their detriment, as I was reading over the Hansard from what has been stated on the bill already before it was time-allocated, I was reminded that each of my beautiful grandchildren is

already burdened with their share of Ontario's debt. As I understand it, Speaker, and I know you will correct me if I'm wrong, that debt is to the tune of more than \$21,000 apiece. You can't time-allocate that; you can't time-allocate owing \$21,000.

0950

I've told each of my grandchildren many times, Speaker, that I'm their pop and my job is to spoil them rotten. What I didn't tell them is that there's no way that Poppy can ever pay off \$21,000 for each of them to retire their share of Ontario's debt. So I sincerely hope that they all live long and prosper and live healthy lives and get to enjoy their retirement years with a good pension and a benefits package that allows them to retire with dignity—dignity that can't be time-allocated.

That brings me back to this chameleon of a bill that's before us this morning, this time-allocated bill, if you will. I say it's a chameleon bill, even though "chameleon" may not be the proper word for the bill. As you know, the chameleon changes colours to fit in with its surroundings; this bill changes direction, it seems, on the whims of this time-allocated government. Believe me, they will be time-allocated because in two years, they won't be the government anymore.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Now, that's a fact.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Yes.

I said at the beginning that we in the NDP say that everyone in the province of Ontario deserves to retire with dignity. Everyone deserves to share in the benefits of a made-in-Ontario public pension plan. No opposition debate deserves to be time-allocated on such an important matter. We believe in the universality of such a plan; however, we are concerned that the Liberal plan that was up for discussion today before they decided to shut down debate and time-allocate it has already been dissolving in dribs and in drabs as more and more people are excluded from what was originally proposed by the Premier.

We want retirement security for everyone. We want it for our children, our grandchildren and our neighbours. We want all Ontarians to prosper. Don't forget, Speaker, that what is supposed to be on the table is what the Liberals started out saying would be their plan B—not the time allocation part, Speaker; the original bill was supposed to be their plan B, their backup plan, the one they would only turn to if they were unable to convince the federal government to augment the Canada Pension Plan, the CPP.

The Ontario pension plan—the whole idea—started out when the Harper Conservatives were in power in Ottawa, and more on that in a moment. So when the Premier went out of her way to campaign so hard for Mr. Trudeau and defeat the Harper Conservatives, we all took it for granted and we all expected that part of her payback for helping with his success in Ontario would be that the Premier could count on his support for improving the CPP. That way, she said, she wouldn't have to bring in an Ontario pension plan. Of course, she didn't talk about time allocation back then either.

By the way, Speaker, when the Premier talked openly about this idea back in August 2015, more than eight

months ago, she said, “Our goal is for every employee in Ontario to be part of the ORPP or a comparable workplace pension plan by 2020.” She didn’t say, of course, “I’ll also time-allocate that bill if the opposition keeps finding little holes to pick away at.”

A few months ago, in January of this year, that “every employee” in the first announcement had been watered down to every “eligible” Ontario employee. Initially, contributions to the new plan were to start in 2017, and now we’re told it will be 2018. Of course, I don’t know what’s going to happen now that the bill is time-allocated. Back in August, the calculation of pension benefits was to be based on a maximum of \$90,000 in 2014 dollars. This chameleon of a bill has now been changed to \$90,000 in 2017 dollars. The original formula would have seen pensionable earnings set at nearly \$93,000 by 2017. As you well know, Speaker, the greater the amount of the money used in the calculation of the benefits, the greater the actual future pension payouts.

Let me say again, we don’t believe in time allocation, but New Democrats believe in a pension plan for everyone, a plan that allows them to retire with dignity. That’s why we proposed just such a plan six years ago. The Liberals are playing a little bit of catch-up. By the way, when we suggested the plan that we brought in, the Liberals rejected it. They voted against it. Now they have their own plan.

We proposed a strong plan, a defined benefits pension plan. I can just imagine what the Harper Conservatives must have said about that, but I do know what Harper’s former finance minister, Joe Oliver, keeps saying about the Ontario plan we were to be discussing in the morning before it was time-allocated to shut us down in debate. In a column in the *National Post* in March, he calls the proposal “a job-killing tax,” a “clunker scheme,” “a \$3.5-billion payroll tax.” Maybe that’s why the bill was time-allocated: The Liberals don’t like hearing such things.

In the *Toronto Star*, reporter Rob Ferguson says Conservative leader Patrick Brown has promised to repeal the ORPP when he becomes Premier—if and when—and refund any money that was taken from employers and employees.

The Associate Minister of Finance, Ms. Hunter, in that same article in the *Toronto Star*, says it’s “misleading” for Mr. Brown to call the pension premiums a tax—before this bill was time-allocated, she made these comments—“since they go into a pension investment pool and not to the government.” With that kind of criticism out there—I guess we’ll never get to hear the full argument on that since the bill has now been time-allocated.

In the *Globe and Mail*, Adrian Morrow writes that the proposed pension plan is one of Premier Wynne’s legacy projects. Well, her legacy actually will be time-allocating pretty well every bill that came before the House when she was Premier. That article in the *Globe and Mail* says that after paying into the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan for 40 years, on average, you’ll be able to retire on \$6,410 a year.

Let’s compare that to the salary of the man, the Liberal insider, picked by his buddies to run the proposed

new pension plan. Saād Rafi will be paid more than half a million dollars, and there’s nothing shabby about that. That’s even more than he was paid when he was brought in to run the Pan Am Games.

Remember the eHealth scandal, Speaker? Well, Mr. Rafi was brought in as a deputy minister in the aftermath of that boondoggle. He was Deputy Minister of Energy when the Liberals brought in the Green Energy Act. He must be a highly talented and capable manager as well as a Liberal insider to be hauling down more than half a million bucks on the pension file. I just wonder if he was the guy who told the Liberal House leader this morning to bring in time allocation because he’s getting tired of hearing all the bad things that people on this side of the House are saying about the plan that he’s going to get more than half a million dollars to introduce, to lay out—half a million bucks a year.

As you know, Speaker, we have pensioners at US Steel Canada in Hamilton losing their health benefits, and scared to death they will be losing a good chunk of their pensions. That’s because this Liberal government and the Liberal government in Ottawa are not doing anything to bring in legislation that would protect workers’ rights when a company goes bankrupt. Why the heck wouldn’t a government that says they care about the people actually strengthen existing pension legislation before bringing in something new—or for that matter, instead of bringing in something called time allocation? Those Hamilton workers and workers right across this province deserve to get what’s coming to them after their 25 or 30 years or more of service to a company, companies that are supposed to set aside that money they owe to the employee pension plan. It’s supposed to always be there. Many of these big companies get government grants, they get government loans, yet the government doesn’t require them to protect the pension funds of their employees.

1000

The Canada Pension Plan is simply not good enough. I think we can all agree on that. So why has Prime Minister Trudeau yet to act on his campaign promise to enhance CPP benefits? Why has the Premier let him off the hook? Why are we time-allocating this bill? This plan was her backup plan—plan B. Plan A was to enhance the CPP. We’ve heard her say that. We wouldn’t need this plan B if she and her buddy in Ottawa were to keep their promises.

New Democrats—I’ll say it again, Speaker—believe in a strong pension plan for everyone. We don’t believe in cutting off debate; we don’t believe in shutting down opposition voices; we don’t believe in time-allocating this bill.

The Premier used to believe that we could do better on pensions. She said it was for everyone in Ontario. Now, in the small print, we see a growing number of people who will be excluded from the plan: the self-employed; people working in federal jurisdictions; my former colleagues at the CBC or at private radio and TV stations; those who work for the airlines and provincial railways or the post office; those who object on religious grounds; temporary foreign workers.

Speaker, if and when the feds finally come to the table and improve the CPP, what happens to the universality of the CPP, which won't be coordinated with the Ontario plan? Has the minister thought this through? If so, perhaps we'll be enlightened by someone on the government side in a few minutes, unless time allocation prevents them from doing that this morning. Inquiring minds would like to know.

As we all know, even if you work for the provincial government, you don't necessarily qualify for a government pension. That point was driven home not that long ago in the *Toronto Star*. Again, Speaker, their investigators discovered that 44% of the 10,682 jobs that were posted and filled in various ministries in the 2013-14 term were temporary or seasonal positions and may not have qualified for the ORPP.

We all know friends or neighbours who have reached the age of 70 and are still working to put food on the table or to pay their hydro bills. They wouldn't qualify for the ORPP either. So what was the Premier thinking when she said that the plan would cover everyone in Ontario? What was she thinking when she said, "We're going to time-allocate this bill"?

Ontario New Democrats believe passionately that everyone in Ontario deserves a decent pension plan with benefits that allow us all to retire with dignity. What is being proposed falls significantly short of that. At this point, I hope the Liberal members opposite have taken notes of what the opposition members have been saying about their bill, this time-allocated bill. We need to hear more about that. We need to hear more about the ways that we think this bill could be improved. We don't need to shut down debate, to silence the opposition, to time-allocate this bill.

Speaker, let me just wrap up with this: Shame on you guys. Shame on the Liberals for time-allocating such an important bill for Ontario's Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's unfortunate that there are only six government members in the chamber to listen to that speech from—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member knows he can't talk about absences.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you. Speaker, last time I spoke was on another time allocation motion. That's what's happening in this House: We don't actually get to speak to bills; we get to speak to time allocation motions.

The last time I was up speaking, I referred to a story, back when I was an electrician, of a boss who used the term, "Don't think; just do it." That's what we get with this Liberal government: no thinking; just doing it. But as I was thinking about this time allocation once again—and put this in perspective: time allocation motions prevent members from doing their job. It strikes at the core of what we're here to do: to bring up points, to debate and safeguard the public interest through debate on public policy.

This is on the pension plan, a major plank of the Liberal election. It's gone into time allocation. The cap-and-

trade bill was the previous one that was on time allocation. Every bill that they ran on, they are preventing debate and preventing this House from doing its job.

Speaker, as I was thinking about this, you can't help but make the comparison between lemmings and Liberal members. You just can't help make that comparison. We all know that lemmings run off a cliff. They never see their leader; they just follow the herd. They just do what they're told and mass suicide ensues for lemmings. I know Liberals like to think of themselves as small, cuddly, fuzzy and warm and whatnot like lemmings as well.

It's interesting: If you look up lemmings online, you'll also get another term that often comes up when you google or search lemmings, and that is "groupthink." I think that's really what we're seeing with this Liberal Party. It's groupthink.

Let me just read a couple of things about groupthink that I think apply to the Liberal members in this House: "Groupthink requires individuals to avoid raising controversial issues or alternative solutions, and there is a loss of individual creativity, uniqueness and independent thinking. The dysfunctional group dynamics of the 'in group'—that would be the Liberals—"produces an 'illusion of invulnerability,' an inflated certainty that the right decision has been made." That speaks to what they're doing here with these time allocation motions, that they are right; they are the only ones who are right and they are the "in group."

It goes on: "Thus the 'in group' significantly overrates its own abilities in decision-making and significantly underrates the abilities of its opponents, the 'out group.'" That's us on this side, the out group. "Furthermore, groupthink can produce dehumanizing actions against the 'out group.'" I think that is a real good summary of what we see happening with this Liberal government. They're the smart ones; they're the intelligent ones. They have an inflated sense of superiority: "We are not going to even let others speak."

But as you go through and look at this definition of groupthink, it says, "Antecedent factors such as group cohesiveness, faulty group structure, and situational context, such as community panic, play into the likelihood of whether or not groupthink will impact the decision-making process." Clearly, once again, community panic is always a great thing for the Liberal government to close off debate on: "We must get this done before the sky falls, before the planet goes off its axis and stops turning." The Liberal government will bring in legislation to do this, of course, but also group cohesiveness—and nobody will counter that; the Liberals are a very cohesive group—and, as we can see with the Premier's office, a very faulty structure. So the present Liberal government satisfies each of those conditions to allow groupthink to take place. They do it quite well.

There was a fellow who pioneered the research on groupthink. His name was Irving Janis. He coined the term "groupthink" along with "doublethink," and you can see that comes out of that George Orwell novel 1984. But

here I think he puts it in even greater clarity: "I use the term 'groupthink' as a quick and easy way to refer to the mode of thinking that persons engage in when concurrence-seeking becomes so dominant in a cohesive in-group that it tends to override realistic appraisal of alternative courses in action."

That says it all. It says it all. Concurrence-seeking is their dominant position, and it has overridden all realistic appraisal of what they do.

Speaker, we've heard it from others: The pension plan has gone through and morphed through a number of different iterations. It has gone from "everybody" to "eligible." It has gone from plan B to plan A to plan C. The member from Windsor-Tecumseh used the term "chameleon." I think it's a good term; it goes along with "lemmings." It is a good term in that the Liberals continue to hide their true purposes and objectives with the bill. That's the chameleon effect of this.

Irving Janis went on to further say, "The main principle of groupthink, which I offer in the spirit of Parkinson's law, is this: The more amiability and esprit de corps there is among the members of a policy-making in-group, the greater the danger that the independent critical thinking will be replaced by groupthink, which is likely to result in irrational and dehumanizing actions directed against" others.

That's really what we're seeing. I can't understand why each of these members on the Liberal side are subjecting themselves to such insignificance and unimportance in their role as legislators. Like those lemmings, they never see the leader at the front of the herd. They never see that fuzzy little one up at the front. They just follow; it doesn't matter where they're going. Even if they know they're going off the cliff, they're going to follow anyway because they are that cohesive group and irrational thinking is not part of the program.

Time allocation, once again, Speaker, on a major plank of this Liberal government: It's stifling debate, killing debate. There must be some Star Trek fans here in the Legislature, and I'm sure there are fans who are watching Star Trek: The Next Generation with Captain Picard—we need a Captain Picard on that Liberal side of the bench, so when the Borg in the corner office says to all the members, "Resistance is futile," we need a Liberal member over there to stand up and say, "No, it's not. Resistance is not futile." Why don't you stand up, speak your mind and be a member of this Legislature?

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my pleasure to welcome, in the west members' gallery, Deborah Maxfield, Darlene Derbyshire and Kim Mommersteeg, all from my riding of Sarnia-Lambton.

And long-term-care workers from North Lambton and Lambton Meadowview are representing CUPE here today. We welcome them.

Also, Mr. Don Pitt, the executive director of the Family Counselling Centre in Sarnia-Lambton, a Family Service of Ontario agency, is here to take part in Family Services Day at Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I had breakfast this morning with three personal support workers. I see Susan, Tammy and Trudy up in the west gallery. I'd like to say welcome to Queen's Park, officially.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: In the House today we have long-term-care workers, members of CUPE from communities across Ontario. They are here today with CUPE Ontario president Fred Hahn and CUPE Ontario secretary-treasurer Candace Rennick, who is herself a long-term-care worker. I know all members will want to applaud them for the work they do and for taking care of our loved ones, and to welcome them to Queen's Park. Welcome.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I would like to introduce a group from CUPE long-term care who met with me this morning: Elizabeth Powell, Victoria Brown, Theresa Ozemoyah and Andrew Johnson.

I'd also like to introduce, on behalf of the member from Haldimand-Norfolk, Susan Wells, who is here from Reach in the Haldimand-Norfolk area. Welcome.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not often that people come all the way from Timmins to be here in the Legislature. Can you imagine? I don't get to do this very often.

I'm so proud to welcome three wonderful people who work in our long-term-care institutions in Timmins, both in extended care at the Golden Manor, which is our municipal home for the aged, which we want to keep: Brenda Lalonde, Debbie Larkin and Christine Laforest. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I have an extensive list of welcomes this morning. First, from the Catholic Women's League, in the members' east gallery: Pauline Krupa, president from Thunder Bay; Anne Madden, president-elect from Godfrey; Betty Colaneri, past president from Niagara-on-the-Lake; Carol Richer, legislation chairperson from Morrisburg; and Linda Squarzolo, resolutions chairperson and second vice-president from Sudbury.

Also visiting from Thunder Bay today: Nancy Chamberlain, executive director of the Thunder Bay Counselling Centre, and Lori Golab, a board member from the Thunder Bay Counselling Centre.

My last one today is from my office. My summer intern is here somewhere—there he is in the front row; I don't know how he got the front-row seat. Jad Halabi, welcome.

And welcome, everybody, to Queen's Park.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm really honoured to welcome to Queen's Park today a friend of mine and an entrepreneur in the province of Ontario, Michael Nitefor.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome two community leaders visiting us from Waterloo region for

Family Services Day: Wanda Wagler-Martin is here from Shalom Counselling Services Inc. in Waterloo, and Leslie Josling is here from KW Counselling Services in Kitchener. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bob Delaney: On behalf of the member for Mississauga-Erindale and page captain Ayan Siddiqui, I'd like to welcome his parents, Sehar and Kamran Siddiqui; his sister, Zayna Siddiqui; grandparents Qulzam and Irshad Siddiqui; and his grandmother Rehana Rizwan. They will be in the members' gallery this morning. Would members please join me in welcoming them to Queen's Park.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to welcome Darlene Derbyshire from Huron-Bruce. She is representing Meadowvale Villas.

I'd also like to introduce, in conjunction with Randy Pettapiece, Susan Melkert, executive director and president at the Family Services Perth Huron, and Nick Forte, board president of Family Services Perth Huron. Welcome.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have visitors from Ivanhoe Lake. I'm ready to bet that 106 of us don't know where that is—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Hey, hey, hold it.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Okay, 100 of you don't know where that is. It is in the north end of my riding, and I'm very happy to welcome Shirley and Russell Litt as well as their friend Hugh McGinn, who came down this morning and are in the visitors' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Joining the surge of families at the Queen's Park conference we have our summer students in the east lobby and in the east members' gallery. Jennifer Commisso: I hope she will enjoy the time with us and enjoy this wonderful place. Welcome, Jennifer.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'd like to inform the House that Shannon and Warren McPherson are here as well as Natalie McPherson: the family of our page captain today, Samantha McPherson. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to welcome Brandon Barangno, a co-op student who has been in my office. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's my pleasure to welcome three individuals from the Community Counselling and Resource Centre in Peterborough: Mike Burger, the president of the board of directors; Casey Ready, executive director; and Bob Campbell, who's the past president of the board. They're celebrating the 60th anniversary of the CCRC serving the great community of Peterborough.

Also, my summer intern, Alexander Cohen, will be joining our ministry for this summer.

Mr. Jim Wilson: In the House today are long-term-care workers, members of CUPE, from communities across Ontario. They're here with CUPE Ontario secretary-treasurer Candace Rennick, who is herself a long-term-care worker. I know that all members would like to applaud these workers for the work that they do in looking after our loved ones. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: There's also a visitor from Sudbury. She is with the wonderful organization the Catholic Women's League of Canada, and her name is Linda Squarzolo. Welcome to Queen's Park, Linda.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The clock has already run out for introductions. I'm going to ask all members to be very brief and get through your introductions. As we have a tribute to give, I want to make sure that we have full attention, so let's get through our introductions. I'm trying to make sure that everyone has an opportunity, but let's be brief, please.

The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: From the Community Counselling Centre of Nipissing we have Alan McQuarrie, Derek Thompson and Helen Antebi.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: From Catholic Family Services of Simcoe County in my riding of Barrie I would like to welcome Maureen Shave, Michelle Bergin and Les Stewart.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to welcome Brad Davis and Leo Heuvelmans from the great riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex. They're here with Family Service Kent for family service Ontario day.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: From Family Services Windsor-Essex: Joyce Zuk. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Two introductions: I'm pleased to introduce Fred Hahn, president of CUPE Ontario, and, in particular, CUPE education workers, and—I'm not sure if she's here yet—Joanne Young Evans from Guelph-Wellington Family Counselling and Support Services.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park two long-term-care workers from my riding: members of CUPE Tom Carrothers and Susan Lovell. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Please welcome, from the Family Service Ontario board, Connie McLeod from Thunder Bay, Sharon Mayne Devine from Peel-Dufferin and the interim executive director of Family Service Ontario, Susan MacIsaac.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Welcome, from Newmarket-Aurora, Trudy Marsden, a long-term-care worker with Southlake village in Newmarket. She's here with CUPE Local 2040.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to take this opportunity as well to welcome all of the long-term-care workers here with CUPE, as well as to introduce my intern, Carling Fee, who also happens to be the granddaughter of MPP Ann Hoggarth.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'd like to welcome the members of the board of Family Service Ontario to the Legislature: Brad Davis from Chatham, Robert Campbell from Peterborough, Lori Golab from Thunder Bay and Shelly McCarthy from Brantford. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to welcome Janet Irvine from family counselling service Northumberland.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin-Caledon on a point of order.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'd like to correct my record. In my question yesterday to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, I said that there were only 12 child protection agencies using CPIN. In fact, there are only nine.

1040

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introductions?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker, for this opportunity to welcome a school from my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood. West Hill Collegiate students are here, the grade 10 class. Welcome.

FIRE IN ALBERTA

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Premier on a point of order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I wanted to just express, on behalf of all of us here, that our hearts go out to all the people who are affected by the fire that's raging in Alberta. We hope everyone stays safe.

As in other situations, we are committed to helping out other provinces in times of need. This is obviously one of those times, and I wanted to let the Legislature and the people of Ontario know that Ontario will be dispatching 119 staff to Alberta this week to assist in managing the fire: 100 firefighters and 19 support staff. We thank them for their service and we want them to come home safely, but our hearts are with the people of Alberta right now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Patrick Brown: On that note, I want to thank the Premier for having Ontario show that sign of support. We all want to be there to help those in Fort McMurray. It's the right thing to do. We want to be with our brothers, sisters and family members in Fort McMurray in this hour of need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think that all of us have real concerns about what's happening in Alberta in Fort McMurray. I want to say that it was important that the Premier let the people of Ontario and this Legislature know that of course Ontario is going to be there doing what we can. I appreciate the quick response from our team. I say that New Democrats as well are concerned and looking to see that things hopefully turn around, and that property and people particularly are safe and well in Alberta.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): First, a personal introduction. The MacKenzies are here visiting, good friends of mine, and I welcome them. They're in the Speaker's gallery today. Thank you for joining us.

Would the members please join me in welcoming the family of the late Keith Roy Brown, MPP for Peter-

borough during the 26th and 27th Parliaments, who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. His daughters Jewell Bennett, Janice Gorodzinsky and Rosemary Ramey, welcome to Queen's Park for this tribute.

Also in the gallery is our former Speaker, MPP David Warner. Thank you, Speaker.

KEITH BROWN

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Keith Brown, former member for Peterborough, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to pay tribute. Do we agree? Agreed.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's truly an honour to be able to stand in this place on behalf of the New Democratic Party to pay tribute to the life of Keith Roy Brown, a member who served here from 1959 to 1967, representing the riding of Peterborough. I would like to welcome his family here today.

I never had the opportunity to work with or meet Mr. Brown. He won his second election in 1963, the same year that I was born. But in doing research for this tribute, I wish I could have, because like so many who have served and continue to serve, he struck me as a man who not only worked tirelessly for his constituents and who enjoyed being with them, but one who had some incredibly funny stories to tell as well.

Looking back, Keith Brown was involved in an exciting time in Ontario's political history. He was part of record investments in schools, universities, highways and public services. Keith Brown is highly regarded for his role in bringing Trent University and Fleming College to Peterborough. He was a member of this House when some of Ontario's first anti-discrimination laws were implemented and when the voting rights of First Nations people were expanded.

Then, as now, members sat on standing committees of the Legislature. In his time here, Keith sat on many, but some of their titles might surprise those serving now. He was a member of the Standing Committee on Game and Fish, the Standing Committee on Agriculture, the Standing Committee on Highways and Highway Safety and many others. It was a time when legislators were more involved in the drafting of legislation. It was also a time when rural Ontario truly made a difference. He was also a member of the Select Committee on Automobile Insurance. I guess some issues have not changed all that much.

Keith was a successful businessman in Peterborough whose enterprises included a car dealership. In fact, when he was elected Deputy Speaker of this House, the headline in the local paper was, "Local Car Dealer Elected Deputy Speaker."

I am positive that his colleagues would have enjoyed his wit. I would like to quote the current member from Peterborough, the Minister of Agriculture—that's the prerogative you get when you're first to speak. I quote from Mr. Leal: "I bought my first ... car from Mr. Brown in 1988. I remember I saved all my money and went down there ... he said to me, 'Seeing as how you're a Liberal, maybe I should get a certified cheque from you.'"

In closing, I would like to thank his family for all their sacrifices so that Keith could work for the people of Ontario and for the sacrifices they continue to make as his son-in-law Daryl Bennett continues to serve as the mayor of Peterborough.

It was said that Keith Brown loved to close a deal. The deal that he made with the people of Ontario was a good one, and we will always respect him for it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tribute.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It truly is an honour to rise today and honour a friend and mentor, the one and only Keith Brown. He was a gentleman. He was born and raised around the tiny hamlet of Bonarlaw, Ontario. As some of you know, it's on the road to Campbellford. Keith Brown, of course, was very interested in agriculture. He was a cheese maker by profession before he made the great move to the urban centre of Peterborough.

Before I begin today, I want to welcome Mr. Brown's daughters, who I know very well: Jewel Bennett, Janice Gorodzinsky and, of course, Rosemary Ramey. I'm truly glad that you could join us here today.

In government, we really stand on the shoulders of others who come before us, and Keith Brown was no exception. He served ably as the Progressive Conservative member for Peterborough from 1959 to 1967. He was a witness to three individuals who were so significant in the lives of Ontario politics and, indeed, national politics. During his time he served with the Honourable Leslie Frost, affectionately known as Old Man Ontario. Then, of course, he served with the famous chairman of the board, the honourable John P. Robarts. In 1959—the class of '59—he was elected with the person who would become affectionately known as "Brampton Billy," the Honourable William Grenville Davis.

He certainly worked closely with Premier Robarts and the Honourable William G. Davis, who was then the Minister of Education and Minister of University Affairs, because Keith helped to bring both Trent University and Fleming College to Peterborough. Like a great captain on a bridge of a ship, Keith could always see the next horizon. For him, that horizon was bringing post-secondary education to the sons and daughters of the people of Peterborough.

Keith was a political champion, winning both the 1959 and 1963 elections with more than 50% of the vote. It was legendary in Peterborough that on election day he used to always loan cars to his opposition so they could get their voters to the polls. That really didn't matter for Keith, when he won over 50% of the vote.

He was elected in the class of 1959 that included Mr. Davis. For the longest period of time, Mr. Davis and Mr.

Brown were the two remaining individuals of that particular class.

1050

Keith went on to serve. He didn't serve in the Bill Davis government. He stepped down in 1967 in order to focus on his many businesses and his family. Keith was a very good politician and he was an excellent businessman. My friend from Timiskaming-Cochrane already told the story about me buying the 1988 Dodge Shadow from Keith. That's a legendary story in Peterborough.

Keith grew his business from a single car lot into two dealerships in Peterborough and Campbellford. He also went on to own a taxi fleet, a coach company and a garage, giving career opportunities to more than 400 people in my riding of Peterborough. His love of his community was exemplary, whether it was his lifelong involvement with the Mark Street United Church, his work with the Masonic Lodge or his support for the Community Living camp in Peterborough.

The camp for Community Living Peterborough has a personal significance for my family, particularly my younger brother. There was a time when families in Peterborough—of course, they didn't have the opportunity to access that camp to give these families that had sons and daughters with an intellectual disability a bit of respite over the summer. It was Keith Brown who provided a fleet of vehicles so those young children could get to that camp each and every day, something that we'll always remember Keith Brown for.

For his commitment to his community, Keith was recognized with the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012, and, of course, in the not-too-distant future, he will be inducted into the Peterborough Business Hall of Fame. He was also honoured at the 170th annual Peterborough Exhibition, of which he was a big supporter.

Keith was a proud family man, raising his three daughters, Jewell, Janice and Rosemary, and, of course, somebody I got to know very well, who passed away in 2005, his beloved wife, Marjorie. There's a lot of talk these days about people with sunny ways, but Marjorie Brown was one of the original people with sunny ways. She had a 100-watt smile. When she went into a room, it turned the room into a very positive experience.

When she passed away in 2005, I saw Keith a short time after that and he had a very, very heavy heart, but then, of course, things changed. He was back, involved in many things in the city of Peterborough, and he was the real patriarch of that family. As has been mentioned, his current son-in-law, a good friend of mine, is doing an incredible job as the mayor of Peterborough, Daryl Bennett.

Ladies and gentlemen, in many ways Keith Brown was larger than life itself. I want to share one of his stories from when he was the member for Peterborough. After he was elected in 1959, Leslie Frost, the Premier of the day, gave him some very good advice. He said, "Always remember, young man, that there are no votes here in Toronto and always pay attention to what's going

on in Peterborough.” To highlight that, I want to tell you the McCulloch chainsaw story.

About two months after he was elected, Keith was paid a visit by the president of Outboard Marine Corp. and the head of the Steelworkers, who represented the hourly rated employees at Outboard Marine. At that particular time, provincial parks in the province of Ontario were using an American chainsaw, the McCulloch chainsaw. But mysteriously, about a month after that meeting, the McCulloch chainsaws in every provincial park across Ontario started to develop problems. There were problems with the carburetors. There were problems with the chains. A month after that, every provincial park had a Pioneer chainsaw made right in Peterborough. That’s how you make changes in politics.

Keith was a good friend of mine. He provided me with a lot of good advice throughout my 30 years of public service in Peterborough. I remember when I got the privilege in 2003, we met shortly after that and he said, “Jeff, remember the advice that Leslie Frost gave to me, and it’s good advice I want to give to you.”

It’s been an honour to follow in Keith Brown’s footsteps as the MPP for Peterborough, although they’ve been very big shoes to fill.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, to my friend Keith, a fond farewell until we meet again. Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Further tributes?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I’m pleased to rise today on behalf of my PC colleagues in paying tribute to a former member of this House, Keith Brown, who passed away on July 7 of last year at the age of 88. Keith is survived by his three daughters, who we certainly welcome here today in the Legislature. Jewell, Janice and Rosemary, thank you for being with us here today. He’s also survived by his three son-in-laws, his eight grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

As was mentioned, Keith was born in 1926 in the Marmora area, the son of a local cheese maker. In 1945, he married Marjorie Wallace, and they were married almost 60 years before Marjorie passed away in 2005. As described by his daughter Jewell, it was truly a lifelong love affair. Keith was always a “family first” kind of guy and was and still is adored by his family.

In 1950, Keith started his own business selling cars at a single used car lot. He successfully grew that business into multiple dealerships, eventually founding the Lift-lock Group of companies. His business operations provided employment for over 400 people in the community, and he was known, as was said, as the car king of the Kawarthas. Keith’s successful car dealerships served multiple generations of customers. He never forgot the name of a customer, and it was obvious that his customers never forgot him.

Keith took a hiatus from his successful business career to run for the PC Party in 1959, for the government of Premier Leslie Frost, “Old Man Ontario,” who was from the neighbouring riding. Keith won the election easily and, in the general election of 1963, was re-elected under

the leadership of Premier John Robarts with over 50% of the vote.

During his tenure as MPP, Keith was committed to bringing growth and development to the Peterborough area, thereby benefitting his entire community. He was described by his family as a true-blue Conservative who was dedicated to serving the people of his Peterborough riding.

Keith continued to be a public figure after his days as MPP. Myself, being the daughter of long-time PC member of Parliament Bill Scott, I remember meeting Keith at various political events and actually being nervous that I was in the presence of the legendary Keith Brown, the man with the car dealerships from Peterborough. I knew my father and my mother, Betty, always considered Keith and his beloved Marjorie to be good friends.

As much as Keith enjoyed the political life, after two terms he decided it was time to return to the private sector. In 1967, he then went back to being the car king of the Kawarthas.

We’ve heard about the member for Peterborough purchasing his first car from Keith in 1988, Keith suggesting that Jeff, the member from Peterborough, being a Liberal, should maybe get a certified cheque. I have to say, even when he was out of elected politics, Keith was still keenly aware of the financial risks associated with the Liberals in politics—clearly an astute man, ahead of his time.

Laughter.

Ms. Laurie Scott: He was also a man who saw the humour in everything—he would have enjoyed that joke—including politics, and was always quick to employ his wit in the spirit of fun.

Although Keith was no longer an elected public official, he never lost his keen interest in politics at all levels, playing various key roles in many elections and leadership campaigns over the years, including in the successful campaign for mayor by his son-in-law Daryl. Daryl is the mayor, but we know where he got his political skills from. Keith took a great deal of pride in Daryl’s success in Peterborough’s municipal politics.

Following his passing, I was speaking with his daughter Jewell about some stories that she has heard about her dad. She received a number of letters from individuals expanding on the many things that her father did for the people he represented as a politician and for the customers he served in being a caring, community-minded businessman. Many of the tributes expressed in these letters were the first time the family had heard the stories.

One particular story was from a woman whose uncle had once purchased a new car from Keith, only to have it stolen a few days later. When Keith heard about it, he gave the man a new car to drive until the police located his car. That same man died of Hodgkin’s in his mid-30s, leaving a widow and two very young daughters. Keith asked the widow to come and see him one day, and when she got there, he wrote “paid in full” on her husband’s car loan. Stories like this only serve to reinforce the image and affection which the family has long held for their beloved patriarch.

Keith was a member of the Masonic Lodge for over 50 years and was a faithful member of the Shriners, serving these fraternal organizations with his leadership and support. He was also a devoted and generous lifelong member of the Mark Street United Church, holding various positions on the board of stewards, board of trustees and session. He was a valued friend, adviser and confidant to all the ministers who served the congregation over the years.

1100

In January of this year, the new Peterborough Business Hall of Fame announced that at its inaugural dinner in May, there would be a number of posthumous inductees into the hall and, not surprisingly, leading the list was Keith Brown. In announcing the criteria for consideration in the hall of fame, it was stated that a business person has to have displayed two definite traits: success in whatever their business endeavours were, and that they had been good to the community. Keith Brown not only met but exceeded these criteria, hands down.

Until the time of his passing, Keith was healthy and remained very active in his community, including the political scene. I have to say he gave me lots of advice when I would see him out at events, which is quite tremendous. As you see the generations unfold, he was still there for us.

His legendary storytelling, his tremendous wit and humour, and his keen business mind were in full evidence right up until the end. He has been referred to as a pillar of the community, a fine example of a person serving his family, his community and his customers.

With the passing of Keith Brown, the province, and the Peterborough area in particular, lost a great man and a legend. We can only be thankful for that legacy that he left behind, and we thank the family for sharing him with us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their heartfelt, thoughtful and kind words.

I would also like to thank the family for attending today for the tribute. What we will do here at the Legislature is make samples of Hansard available for you, and a DVD for your memories.

Again, one last time, thank you for the gift of Keith Brown.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. This morning, I was planning on asking the Liberals about the health cuts and about the autism funding cuts. Instead, I'm forced to ask this Premier about a media report by David Reevely about an unprecedented fifth OPP investigation—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Come out with your hands up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton is warned.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, an unprecedented fifth OPP investigation:

—OPP investigation number one: the Ornge scandal;

—OPP investigation number two: the gas plant scandal;

—OPP investigations numbers three and four: the Sudbury bribery scandal.

Can the Premier confirm that her government is in fact under a fifth OPP investigation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Energy will want to comment.

We were not aware of any investigation until the media report. If we are contacted, we will, as always, cooperate fully with authorities.

We're taking a cautious and a responsible approach to offshore wind to allow for the development of research and coordination. The Ministry of the Environment is doing some of that research, looking at the issue, to ensure that we protect the health and safety of people and of the environment. We look forward to additional research coming forward. We stand behind our cautious and responsible approach to offshore wind energy.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I haven't acknowledged you yet.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: In early 2011, Trillium Power Wind was moving ahead with their offshore wind project near Kingston. At 3 p.m. on February 11, 2011, Trillium was set to close a deal on financing that project, a fact that the Liberals were well aware of.

At 2:24 p.m. that same day, minutes before the deal was to close, the Liberals put out a press release, cancelling the offshore wind program without ever explaining why. When Trillium tried to find out why, there wasn't a single record of the government's decision.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier normally make policy by press releases?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The Premier has been extremely clear that we would open up the government completely—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If you choose to go down that road—I think I've made it quite clear that I want to go through question period properly.

Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the allegations are within a time frame that is covered by this report from the Information and Privacy Commissioner: "I have appreciated the cooperation I have received from Premier Kathleen Wynne.... The Premier issued a directive in accordance with the recommendations made in the report and committed the government to greater transparency and accountability.... In addition, political staff received

in-depth training on record retention responsibilities. I applaud these developments.”

Interjections.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that the opposition are heeing and hawing about the report of the independent information commissioner.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier: Dodge, deny, deflect, muddy the waters—let me be a bit more specific. We know the Premier signed the deal to cancel the gas plants in order to save the seat of the finance minister, but the question is, why did the Liberal cabinet cancel the offshore wind project? Is it because the current economic development minister was worried about the planned offshore wind project at the Scarborough Bluffs? Was it to save the Liberal seat in Kingston? Or was it because Trillium never donated to the Ontario Liberal Party?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: On the issue of offshore wind, we continue to take a cautious and responsible approach. There are thousands of land-based wind turbines around the world backed by decades of science and experience.

Offshore wind in freshwater lakes is still at early stages of development worldwide. That's why we still have a moratorium on offshore wind development. The Ministry of the Environment continues to research this issue, to ensure that we protect our health and the health of our environment, Mr. Speaker. We look forward to additional research—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —coming forward from the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Even though he's in a different seat, the member from Prince Edward–Hastings will come to order. I don't think he heard me because he was still heckling while I was asking him to come to order.

You have a wrap-up sentence, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I've finished, thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. We know the Liberals cancelled the gas plants because they were afraid of losing seats in the 2011 election. That political decision cost Ontario a billion dollars. That billion dollars is being paid by every senior, every family in Ontario on their skyrocketing hydro bills, and now Ontario families and seniors may be on the hook for another \$500 million that Trillium is

suing for. Is that the cautious approach the Minister of Energy describes?

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: Why should families and seniors pay for yet another Liberal scandal?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the Minister of Energy has said, there is research that is ongoing, Mr. Speaker. There's decades of research on land-based wind turbines. There is not the same body of research for freshwater lake turbines—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Why were you signing contracts? Why were you ready to sign contracts?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And whoever said that last one, if I knew who you were, I could bring you to order, too.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's why there continues to be a moratorium. We are taking a responsible approach and we're waiting for that body of research to be developed.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nipissing, come to order.

Supplementary?

1110

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier: I think the government and the Premier are missing the point. Because of their actions, every family is paying more. Hydro customers are already paying more than \$1,000 extra under the Liberals because of your political intervention. Now Trillium, I'll be very clear on this, is suing the Liberals for \$500 million. That's going to go on everyone's bill. That's an extra \$100 for every home in Ontario. When is enough enough? Because of your mistakes, everyone in Ontario is paying.

Does the Premier really think Ontario families and seniors should pay thousands of dollars more because of this government's incompetence?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you. This is not the moment in which I ask for attention, and I even—I am still standing. When I sit down, you start. I'll deal with it.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The Leader of the Opposition knows that this matter is before the courts. He also didn't mention that their statement of claim was thrown out by the Court of Appeal, and they have restarted that court case. It's an allegation. This party doesn't know anything about oversight. This government has created the position of Financial Accountability—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will be insistent and consistent.

Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: This government has created the position of Financial Accountability Officer; made the French Language Services Commissioner independent; put into place—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —I'll complete the list, Mr. Speaker—put into place the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth; allocated new powers to the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth; expanded the Ombudsman's role to include oversight of municipalities, school boards and publicly funded universities—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier: If the Minister of Energy is correct that we can't talk about anything related to an OPP investigation, when there's five—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The back and forth is not helpful. I'd like to be able to put the question properly, as I want the answers to be put properly.

Please finish.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, the question is for the Premier. If we can't discuss any matter that's under an OPP investigation, when there are an unprecedented five OPP investigations, you have to leave us something to ask about here in the Legislature. The billions of dollars wasted on eHealth and Ornge scandals are being felt in every community in Ontario. Hospitals are being closed, doctors are being fired, nurses are being let go. The billions of dollars wasted on smart meters and gas—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sorry, but I'm getting challenged. The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, the member from Hamilton Mountain and the member from Trinity-Spadina, come to order.

Carry on.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Those scandals are being felt in every bill. Life is getting harder under the Liberals. So my question is, does this government not appreciate that it's harder and harder for families and seniors? Does this government not care that people can't get the health care they need? My question is for the Premier—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Your time is up. Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the opposition continues to ignore what's really happening in the electricity sector. They have acknowledged and they support what's happening in the nuclear sector—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Leeds-Grenville, second time.

Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: They acknowledge and support what's happening in the nuclear sector, where, for the next 30 years, we are going to be introducing into the grid electricity at 7.7 cents per kilowatt hour. We'll be producing clean energy. They refuse to acknowledge that wind prices are coming in at grid rate now, at 8.5 cents a kilowatt hour.

They've been haranguing us about wind, and they now know that wind is successful. They can't face the truth—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Apparently, the Liberals ripped up energy contracts for political gain, again. It's alleged they destroyed energy-related documents, again. Now the OPP anti-rackets branch is investigating the Premier's office, again.

The Premier signed off on the gas plants cancellation, Speaker. What was her role in the cancelling of the wind projects?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, as I have just said, we were not aware of any investigation until the media report. If we're contacted, we will obviously cooperate fully.

We're taking a cautious and responsible approach to offshore wind in order to allow for the development of research and coordination.

The Ministry of the Environment is undertaking that research. The fact is that there is a large body of research that backs up the placement of land-based wind turbines around the world. That same body of research does not exist for offshore freshwater wind turbines. We will await that body of research before decisions are made.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, we have a very serious problem here in the province of Ontario. When the Quebec Liberals were facing scandal after scandal in the construction industry, they decided to clear the air by establishing the Charbonneau commission. Officially, it was called the Commission of inquiry on the Awarding and Management of Public Contracts in the Construction Industry.

After the gas plant scandal, the Hydro One sell-off, the fundraising quotas in the energy sector and now the latest OPP investigation, it's time for a similar commission into the energy sector here in Ontario.

Will this Premier do the right thing by the people of this province and call a commission of inquiry on the awarding and management of public contracts in the energy industry, so that Ontarians can get the answers that they so rightly deserve?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: A commission of inquiry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.
Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I appreciate the role of the opposition. I appreciate the fact that they have something in the newspaper which is in the form of an allegation. And I appreciate the fact that the opposition is not going to stand up and say anything good about this government, Mr. Speaker, but I will.

You know what? She hasn't mentioned Hydro One lately, Mr. Speaker. She hasn't mentioned Hydro One because the way we're paying down debt from the proceeds of the IPO, we are saving interest charges of \$100 million a year by paying down debt—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Order.

Is the member finished? Wrap up?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals ripped up gas plants contracts so they could win a handful of seats in Mississauga and Oakville. The Premier admitted that. That cost Ontarians \$1.1 billion. It's alleged—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The Minister of Natural Resources, come to order. The deputy House leader, come to order.

Finish, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's alleged that they ripped up FIT contracts and then tried to hide the evidence in order to win seats in Scarborough. This could cost Ontarians \$500 million or more.

These decisions are about helping the Liberal Party—not the people, not green energy or good policy. But people end up paying the price, Speaker, and they deserve the answers.

Will this Premier do the right thing by the people of this province and call a commission of inquiry into the awarding and the management of public contracts in Ontario's energy sector?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

1120

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, again, I understand the role of the opposition. But when the leader gets up, it's hard to focus on an answer when she takes Kenora in the north and she takes Toronto in the south and she—she's all over the map on every issue that she can possibly raise in a question. So I choose to take one aspect of what she's raised in her shotgun approach and talk about what's positive happening in this province today.

She won't ask a question about Moody's investors raising the credit rating of the province of Ontario, saying that we're meeting our targets, we're growing the econ-

omy and we're creating jobs. She won't talk about any of those. She's embarrassed by how successful we are.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier, but I might remind the minister and the Premier that the role of government is actually to work in the interests of Ontarians, not the Liberal Party. The scandal is not limited to gas plants and the FIT contracts, which were cancelled to help the Liberal Party.

The government is selling Hydro One, which doesn't build infrastructure but does help out a group of bankers who, in turn, attended private fundraisers with the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Finance. The Liberal Party held a \$100,000 fundraiser with private nuclear companies immediately before the government chose private companies and scrapped their plans to work with the OPG.

People want their government to focus on making sure that families and businesses have affordable, reliable electricity in this province. But every time the Liberal Party makes a deal, their only question seems to be, how can this help the Liberal Party?

Will this Premier clear the air and actually call a commission of inquiry, like the people prefer?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Trinity-Spadina, it's the second time.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to talk to the member opposite on the issue of fundraising that she raised, because when we talk about getting ideas from various parts of the province and from the opposition parties, we actually have asked the PCs and the NDP and the Green Party to sit down and look at draft legislation.

The question that the leader of the third party asked was a very wide-ranging question. She began with fundraising. It's really disappointing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's really disappointing that of all of the parties—the PCs, the NDP and the Green Party—the only party that has refused to come to look at the draft legislation and give input is the NDP.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Disappointing? The Premier needs to look in the mirror to see what real disappointment is. The people of this province are disappointed in this Liberal government and they're disappointed in this Premier for the way they're handling the energy file. When the Liberal government makes energy decisions in this province, the Liberal Party wins and Ontarians lose. It happens time and time again.

There is something seriously wrong here and people deserve some basic answers from their government and from their Premier. She has promised openness and transparency. Will she finally take an opportunity to actually

fulfill that promise and call a commission of inquiry on the awarding and management of public contracts in the energy sector in this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me take another piece of the question that the leader of the third party focused on. She talks about Hydro One. Now, I understand that the leader of the third party and I have a difference of opinion on Hydro One. But here's the thing: I am very surprised that the leader of the third party has not once expressed her support for the building of transit and transportation infrastructure in this province, and that she doesn't seem to understand that in order to be able to build transit, we need funding.

She campaigned on the same fiscal assumptions that we did, Mr. Speaker, and we have moved forward to make those investments. It's very surprising to me that not only will the NDP not give us substance in terms of fundraising advice, but she also isn't interested in talking about how we should invest in transit and how we should pay for that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock. Be seated, please.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier of this province and her ministers insist that their energy decisions are business as usual, but there is a pattern, Speaker. There's a pattern that is very serious and very wrong. The Liberal Party benefits, the OPP investigates, and people pay more. That's the pattern of this Liberal government when it comes to the energy sector.

The Premier has promised transparency over and over again. I think she does not know what that word means. I'm calling on her to keep that promise. If everything is okay, if everything is above board, if there's no problem whatsoever, then the Premier has got nothing to worry about and the air can be cleared for the people of this province.

I ask her to take my question seriously, to actually give the people of this province the respect they deserve and answer the question that I'm asking her—not try to be obtuse about it but answer the question that I'm asking her, which is to give Ontario's people the answers they deserve and call a commission of inquiry into the awarding and management of public contracts in the energy sector in this province—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party knows that there's a case before the courts. She knows that we made a decision to gather evidence and to look at the research. She knows. I would think that the NDP has got research on clean, renewable energy, Mr. Speaker, so she would know that there are decades of research that has been done on land-based wind turbines. That same body of research does not exist for offshore, freshwater siting of turbines. That research is being done, and we will take the responsible approach and await the results of that research.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is to the Premier. A year ago today, the Minister of Economic Development said, "I'd like to see us land a new [manufacturing] plant or two in the next five or 10 years." He even went so far as to appoint an auto czar to make that happen.

Yet the Minister of the Environment has totally different plans. At the same time that he threatened the 50,000 jobs in the nuclear industry, he also took aim at the nearly one in six Ontario jobs that benefit from the auto industry. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment described our Canadian manufacturers as "lacking courageous leadership" and doomed to have BMW and Tesla "start eating [their] lunch."

For the second day in a row, which cabinet minister does the Premier side with, the minister who wants auto manufacturing or the minister who doesn't?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear all along that we are going to invest in our economy to create good-paying jobs, and we have. The plan has been working: over 630,000 net new jobs since the recession.

We have become the top destination in all of North America for foreign direct investment, beating out California, Texas, New York and every other province. We do so because we are partnering with the auto sector, recognizing the transformations that they're making in manufacturing—value-added manufacturing, which, by the way, is also an improvement for our environment. They work hand in hand. We're working closely together to improve our economy, improve our environment and, Mr. Speaker, we're winning by this point.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Again to the Premier: Just last year the Premier appointed Ray Tanguay as the auto czar to help bring new auto investment to our province. In one day, the environment minister has reversed much of that hard work. It's another day, another uninformed comment from the environment minister.

1130

We've already lost General Motors in Windsor and the Ford plant near St. Thomas, and the GM plant in Oshawa could be next. If the GM plant leaves, it alone will cost Ontario \$5.7 billion in GDP and over 33,000 well-paying jobs. That's why I wrote to Ray Tanguay to see if he agrees with the minister's comments.

Speaker, who does the Premier think should produce the government's policies on the auto sector, the expert with over 30 years' experience or Glen Murray?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister's title or riding, please.

Minister of Finance?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question because it gives us the opportunity to once again talk about the importance of the auto industry and the importance of continuing to support a sector. By the way, Mr. Speaker,

the Progressive Conservatives voted against the opportunity to save the auto industry when it was most in need. They sat on their hands and they did not support what was necessary.

As a result of our ongoing support, since 2003, our government has invested over \$1 billion, leveraging an additional \$12 billion from the private sector for the auto industry. Ontario owns four of the top five positions in the latest survey by J.D. Power and Associates for quality vehicles built in North America.

Over the past two years, Ontario has seen nearly \$4.5 billion in new auto investments. This is helping to create and sustain over 21,000 jobs in that very sector, as well as a peripheral sector that services that industry.

The auto industry is critical to Ontario, and we are going to continue to support it and we are going to continue to support—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. Currently, the OPP is investigating the Liberal government for the gas plants scandal, Ornge kickbacks and the Sudbury bribery scandal. Now, the OPP is investigating the Liberal government for deleting documents in a \$2.25-billion lawsuit regarding the cancellation of wind contracts to save seats.

It seems that this is the fifth OPP probe into this Liberal government. It seems that every time we look at Liberal self-interest, it leads to police investigations. Can the Premier explain this pattern?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of community—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Government and consumer services.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government services, whatever it is.

Hon. David Orazietti: I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

Look, it's pretty clear that on this side of the House, open, transparent and accountable records are what this government supports. Bill 8—

Laughter.

Hon. David Orazietti: The member opposite laughs, but when we introduced Bill 8, with higher standards for transparency and accountability, the NDP voted against it. They sit here and laugh about it, but they voted against it.

We created an offence of up to \$5,000 for the willful destruction of records, ensuring that all chiefs of staff were designated as the person accountable for records and compliance. We developed a mandatory training program with respect to that and we required that every institution have reasonable measures to secure their records.

When we introduced Bill 8 to raise the standards and raise the bar in Ontario, this party and those members—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: A commission of inquiry would clear the air. It would clear the air with regard to the cancellation of the wind contracts and the destruction of documents. It would perhaps clear the air with regards to why this government is selling off Hydro One and it would maybe answer some questions around the Liberal government's fundraising and the connection to the energy sector.

If the Premier has nothing to hide, why not just clear the air? Will the Premier do the right thing and call a commission of inquiry into the awarding and management of public contracts in the energy sector? Yes or no?

Hon. David Orazietti: The OPP investigation will take place. It will take place as an independent investigation. We're not going to interfere in that in any way, nor should we.

The importance of this is to ensure that we continue to raise the standard around record keeping and record retention. That's what our government is doing.

In fact, the Information and Privacy Commissioner commented on that and specifically said, with regards to Bill 8—which they voted against—that with the steps that we have taken, “I am pleased to report that the Premier and the government have made significant progress in addressing each of the recommendations made. I appreciate the cooperation I've received from Premier Kathleen Wynne.” This, I think, speaks volumes to the leadership of this Premier in raising the standard for record keeping, retention, and ensuring that appropriate records are kept.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Be seated, please. As the question ended, I was ready to stand up and ask the member from Lanark to come to order, and also the member from Kitchener-Waterloo.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Granville Anderson: My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. We all agree that the quality of our air directly impacts our health, our environment and the future of all Ontarians. I and the residents of Durham take particular interest as we live east of Canada's largest city and our air quality changes are impacted by air in Toronto. It is in my constituents' and everyone's best interest that our air be as clean as possible. I understand that the 2014 air quality report was recently released, marking 44 years of reporting on air quality in Ontario. Would the minister please provide more details to the House on the findings of the 2014 air quality report?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: There's very, very good news in the air quality report and I'd like to share it with the House.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, second time.

Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The state of air quality in Ontario report has shown some amazing progress. There were absolutely no smog advisories in 2014, and the province's air was rated "very good" for 94% of the year. The 2014 Ontario air quality report shows significant decreases in smog-causing pollutants, specifically a 42% decrease in nitrogen oxide, a 49% decrease in sulphur dioxide, 40%—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, second time. Just as a reminder, if you get two warnings, the next time you're out.

Carry on.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —and a 31% decrease in fine particulate matter. These are very significant reductions. As a matter of fact, they're record-breaking reductions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Speaker, thank you to the minister. The 2014 air quality report seems to confirm that our actions are contributing to improve air quality and helping to fight climate change. I am glad to be part of a government that takes the health of our people and environment seriously. We have set a new air standard and rules for industry air emissions, and eliminated coal-fired power plants, and we continue investing in clean and renewable energy and have placed emissions caps on sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides. All across Ontario, we are seeing improvements to air quality. Would the minister please provide the House specific regional information coming out of the air quality report?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's a pleasure to do so. Ontario has a network of 39 outside air monitoring stations. I'd just like to give a bit of a summary of what's going on across Ontario:

—in Windsor, very good to good air quality 90% of the time in 2014. Nitrogen dioxide concentrations, a problem in Windsor, are down 26%, and sulphur dioxide is down 58%;

—in London, very good air quality 91% of the time, and nitrogen dioxide down 58%;

—here in Toronto, very good to good air quality 93% of the time, with nitrogen dioxide down 36%, and sulphur dioxide down a remarkable 75% over the same period;

—in Kingston, good air quality 94% of the time, with nitrogen dioxide down 35%; and

—in my parliamentary assistant's great city of Sudbury, air quality is good 97% of the time, which is remarkable.

1140

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Speaker, volunteer groups were shocked that this minister allowed the Ontario Trillium Foundation to scrap its vital capital program. Now we learn that the move is just part of what only can be described as a traumatic overhaul of Trillium, and it's all happening without input from front-line staff, OTF volunteers or the communities that this cherished program has served so well. Included is a proposal by the OTF board to dramatically reduce local input in the granting process by slashing the number of catchment areas from 16 to just five.

Speaker, is the minister aware of this plan? What is he doing to protect front-line jobs at OTF and ensure it continues to support volunteer groups in small towns and rural Ontario?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to start by saying how proud we are as a government to support the Ontario Trillium Foundation. We know that the Trillium foundation is such a successful organization, and it does great work right across the province of Ontario.

This year, our contribution as a government to Ontario Trillium is \$115 million, which goes out to many different parts of Ontario. We've invested \$25 million in Ontario Trillium for a new community capital program that we know is going to support the capital build of many different organizations here in Ontario. With Canada 150, we see this as an exciting addition to the celebration that will take place next year. We're very proud of our Trillium foundation and the local boards that make the decisions at the local level across the province, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Well, Speaker, back to the minister, but from that answer it's obvious the minister doesn't know about the situation. He'll be interested to know, though, that decisions made by local grant review teams were recently reversed by OTF's central liaison committee after \$3.4 million was left on the table at year end. Instead of going back to the local teams—these experts—this committee handpicked the winners by approving applications that were previously rejected. This behaviour is eroding the role of local volunteers and program staff who know the communities they serve.

The good news is, though, that the minister can stop it. The CEO's report to the board states very clearly that the minister must approve the regionalization plan. Speaker, why is the minister allowing the board to proceed with this plan without insisting that OTF conduct broad consultation first?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question. It sounds as though he has some concerns.

Mr. Speaker, there's a business plan that's presented to us as a ministry each year. Anything that's in that business plan is approved by me as the minister, and it goes through a very serious process locally. Any type of major shift that happens in any of our agencies that affects the public is open to discussion locally. I continue to submit names that go to cabinet that are approved for people who serve on these 16 boards. The 16 boards are currently intact, and they will continue to be in that position. That's the current plan.

If he has a specific item that he'd like to talk to me about, perhaps a local board that's within his area, I would love to sit down and talk to him about that.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. When it comes to our health care, what's best for patients should always be the bottom line, Speaker. But this Premier is forcing Ontario's hospitals to make deep cuts to front-line care, and patients are the ones who are paying the price.

More than 1,200 nursing positions have been cut since the start of 2015. Hospital beds are being shut down. Lab services and outpatient clinics are closing. Patients see what's happening to our health care, and families are feeling it. The front-line workers and nurses know exactly how deep these cuts are, but the Premier doesn't seem to be listening.

Speaker, what will it take for this Premier to stop cutting hospital care and restore the stable, predictable funding that our public hospitals deserve?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: This year in the budget we've increased our hospital line by 2.1%—well above the rate of inflation, Mr. Speaker. It's a \$345-million increase.

At the same time, we're now entering year five of the quality changes that we've made to our health care system, beginning with our hospitals. We asked ICES, the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences, to do a preliminary evaluation of the impact, and here's what they found. In our hospitals, they found that we are seeing more patients. We're seeing a reduction in the average length of stay for surgical and medical admissions. We're seeing, importantly, improvement in nursing-sensitive measures for selected conditions. We're seeing fewer falls, fewer pressure sores, fewer urinary tract infections, fewer in-hospital cases of pneumonia, and we're seeing that hospital readmission rates have not changed.

We're actually seeing tremendous improvements with the changes we've implemented.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, for the past four years, base operating funding for hospitals increased by—just take a guess—zero, 0%. Now in 2016, not-

withstanding the way the minister tries to kind of reclaim what's really in that budget, it's only a 1% increase to base funding in that budget. Page 116: He can ask his finance minister to look it up for him.

It's no wonder that 1,200 nursing positions have been cut, it's no wonder that people in Toronto hospitals are being treated in hallways and it's no wonder that folks in Scarborough are having surgeries in operating rooms that were built in 1956.

Health care is the silent crisis for this Liberal government. When will the Premier do the right thing, stop the hospital cuts and ensure funding for our hospitals keeps up with inflation and population growth in our province?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know that the leader of the third party understands that base funding is just part of the funding that hospitals receive. We're increasing the funding for operating for hospitals by 2.1% this year.

But I understand that she's going back to their behaviour in the 1990s, when they were in power. We're not going to do that. We're not going to do what they did in the last two years of NDP government, where they cut the health care budget two years in a row. We're not going to do what they did where, in their last year, they reduced hospital funding by 1%. We're not going to do what they did when they were in power, which was close 13% of mental health beds. That's 300 beds. They closed 24% of hospital beds.

We're continuing to invest in our hospitals and in our health care system. That's demonstrated clearly in the budget. The math does add up and makes sense. This is a substantial investment.

I want to congratulate our health care workers for the excellent work they do every day.

FAMILY SERVICE ONTARIO

Mr. Vic Dhillon: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Today, we're pleased to have Family Service Ontario with us here in the Legislature. FSO and its 48 member agencies play an integral role in this government's efforts to end violence against women, as well as the transformation of Ontario's developmental services system.

I'm proud that one of these agencies, Catholic Family Services of Peel Dufferin, is located in my riding of Brampton West. They're the lead agency for the conjoined counselling pilot project, and I know that their executive director, Sharon Mayne Devine, is with us here in the House this morning.

Can the minister please elaborate on the important work that FSO does to support vulnerable Ontarians and how the ministry supports them in this?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you very much to the member from Brampton West for the question.

As the member has said, the work of Family Service Ontario and their agencies touches thousands of Ontarians and helps to make the lives of the people they serve better. FSO offers programs for children and adults with

developmental disabilities. They receive ministry funding for community participation, caregiver respite services and supports, and case management services. Also, through funding provided by my ministry, FSO agencies provide counselling and therapy for survivors of sexual abuse and family violence.

The services provided by FSO and their member agencies are vital. I truly value the work done by FSO front-line workers and will continue to work closely with them in order to support vulnerable Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you, Minister. Clearly, this government recognizes the great work organizations such as Family Service Ontario do in our province.

In fact, I know that we continue to make investments that support some of our most vulnerable individuals. With the 2016 budget, our government has announced \$2.4 million to pilot a new portable housing benefit that would offer more options for those fleeing domestic violence, benefiting nearly 500 households; a \$1-million Rural Realities Fund to help rural, remote and northern agencies develop local solutions that address the unique challenges in serving their communities; and \$1.5 million in aboriginal-designed and delivered community service, including the development of an expanded province-wide counseling help line for aboriginal women.

1150

I've recently heard that counselling services through FSO have also been expanded. Mr. Speaker, can the minister please share some of the details of this expansion with the House?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: As part of our government's ongoing efforts to end violence against women, I'm pleased to let this House know that we're currently funding a two-year pilot project with FSO to provide joint counselling programs for couples experiencing situational couple violence. This pilot will serve 100 couples from three pilot sites—one northern, one rural and one urban—and a focus will be placed on serving the aboriginal community as well as French-speaking clients. This pilot is part of work aimed at reducing the thinking, behaviours and conflict that may lead to domestic violence. This project is exploring the effectiveness of joint counselling for couples in lower-risk situational couple violence and whether early intervention would lead to prevention of further domestic violence.

I'd like to thank FSO for being here today. Your work makes a real difference in the lives of thousands of Ontarians every day.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of Education. Speaker, while families of children with autism struggle to deal with this government's removal of vital IBI services, others are facing further hardship in having their children's designated service dog approved for use at school.

Families in the region of Waterloo have reported significant hurdles with the local board not letting their

child's trained service dog accompany them to school. These are trained, professional dogs that are to be the child's constant companion, helping them overcome their challenges and improve social interactions.

Speaker, does the minister agree that families of children with autism shouldn't have their service dogs taken away from them when they get to school?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I thank the member opposite for his question. Obviously, we are very concerned about the safety, the health and the well-being of students with autism, or students with, quite frankly, a variety of other disabilities. We know that in many cases service dogs do help children with disabilities, and that could be blind students, or it might be deaf students in some cases. Certainly, students with autism and with a variety of mental health issues may have service dogs. We know that there are a variety of circumstances.

School boards are responsible for having their own policies. What I would say is that their policies, however, must be compliant with the Ontario Human Rights Code and must be compliant with Ontario's equity and inclusive education policy. So there are provincial laws and policies—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, nine-year-old Jack and his dog Jensen will now be allowed on school grounds for just certain activities, but accommodation in the classroom has yet to be addressed. Meantime, in another case, the father of a seven-year-old says the board "jerked my chain for four months of 'process,' followed by a flat denial."

The AODA calls for accommodations for people with service animals and the Ontario Human Rights Code speaks to the "duty to accommodate persons with disabilities." We support service dogs for the blind, PTSD sufferers and others. Families of children with autism shouldn't have to face further hardships to get the same accommodations for their children.

Speaker, will the minister commit to reviewing Ontario school board service dog procedures and prevent further hardships for families of children with autism?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Certainly the boards are responsible for complying with the Ontario Human Rights Code and the equity policies. At the same time, I think it is important to understand, regardless of what the dog is for—what disability is being addressed—that these are individual circumstances, and the board does look at things like the training of the dog, whether or not the child is being left independently with the dog during class, the training relationship between the child and the dog, and the ability to control the dog, or at least to make sure that the dog is under control.

So there are a variety of things that have to do with the individual child and the individual animal, and that's why boards make—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. For four straight years, hospital budgets have been frozen, and our hospitals have been forced to make deep cuts to patient care.

Northern Ontario hospitals have been hard hit. Front-line workers have been laid off and beds have been closed across the entire north, in Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins, North Bay, Atikokan, Temiskaming Shores, and the list goes on. At the North Bay hospital, more than 300 front-line workers have been cut in the last four years. But this government doesn't seem to care about cuts to patient care.

When will the Premier stop the cuts to health care in the north and restore stable, predictable funding to Ontario hospitals?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The member opposite well knows that we continue to invest. Our health care budget goes up each and every year an additional \$1 billion, to almost \$52 billion this year alone. Those are important investments.

It includes \$160 million dedicated solely to improving access and wait times for hospital services, things like cataract surgery and knee and hip replacements. Importantly, \$7.5 million is dedicated just for our small and rural hospitals, many of them in the north of the province.

That does not include a continuation of our Small and Rural Hospital Transformation Fund, which is a \$20-million annual fund just for small and rural hospitals.

As well, there is \$6 million of new funding for mental health hospitals.

We continue to invest. These are important investments in our hospitals. But we also need to recognize that we're transforming our health care system and moving more activities and supports out of hospitals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Northerners have a hard enough time gaining access to health care. We also face some of the greatest health inequity. The last thing that we need is a Premier who cuts our hospitals.

Health care in the north is a silent crisis of this Liberal government. Patients know it. Northerners know it. Families know it. But the Premier refuses to admit it.

My question is straightforward: When will the Premier stop cutting hospital care in northern Ontario and make sure that, at the very least, hospital funding keeps up with inflation and Ontario population growth?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The facts just don't support what the member opposite is alleging. We've increased hospital funding across the north by 54%. We're building new hospitals right across this province. Seven new builds, or substantial additions, are taking place in Thunder Bay, Sudbury, North Bay, Sioux Lookout, the Sault hospital, West Parry Sound and Mattawa general hospital.

We're making investments. The member well knows that I was in Sudbury not that long ago, announcing a new PET scanner for the Sudbury hospital.

We are investing like never before. We have a new school of medicine in the north, which has resulted in an increase of more than 20% more doctors being employed and working in the north than before. Our first nurse-practitioner-led clinic was in Sudbury, in the north.

We are investing in health care in the northern part of this province like never before.

ONTARIO GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. The mining and exploration industry is an incredibly important contributor in my riding of Sudbury and, of course, to our provincial economy. Ontario is a leading jurisdiction for the exploration and production of minerals in Canada, and a major player across the world.

One of the major players is the Ontario Geological Survey. This organization is responsible for documenting and communicating the geology of Ontario, and it has achieved many milestones for Ontario's mineral sector. Throughout the north today, the OGS is celebrating its own major milestone: its 125th anniversary.

Can the minister please tell us more about what the OGS is doing for us in Ontario?

1200

Hon. Michael Gravelle: That's just a great question from the member for Sudbury. This year is the 125th anniversary of the Ontario Geological Survey, and we could not be prouder. In fact, celebrations of this historic occasion are happening all across northern Ontario today so I want to do a bit of a shout-out, if I may, to the OGS members who may be watching today.

The OGS has been involved in some amazing and cutting-edge initiatives. Not everybody may know this, but the OGS worked with NASA on its missions to the moon in the 1970s. It's even connected to the first rock with evidence of water discovered on Mars. The OGS work has led to some incredible discoveries, such as a 9,000-year-old arrowhead near Wawa.

The Ontario Geological Survey provides essential tools that are readily available to governments, to industry and to communities at large. These tools are critical to the ongoing development of Ontario's mineral sector. I am proud of the OGS. I know everybody in the House is happy to celebrate its 125th anniversary and all it has achieved during that time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. It is clear that the Ontario Geological Survey has an important role in helping to support Ontario's mineral sector. Ontario accounts for approximately 25% of mining jobs in Canada, with about two thirds of these jobs in the north. I also understand that the mineral sector is the largest private sector employer of aboriginal peoples in Canada—something to be very proud of. So it is great to

hear that our government has been taking steps to maintain Ontario's place as the top jurisdiction for the exploration and production of minerals in Canada.

There have been many concerns recently about the mineral sector due to global commodity prices. Can the minister please tell us more about the OGS and the investments that Ontario is making to support the mineral industry in our great province?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It gives me great pride to be able to say that today Ontario is Canada's leading jurisdiction for the exploration and production of minerals, in large part because of the work done by the OGS.

The work of the Ontario Geological Survey has impacted an extraordinary number of initiatives. OGS mapping in the Werner Lake area north of Kenora led to an \$11-million investment in cobalt exploration. OGS data was part of the early groundwork that led to the discovery of a gold deposit near Fort Frances and Emo and attracted private sector investment in New Gold's Rainy River project, a very exciting new project. The work of the OGS helped the municipality of Shelburne find safe drinking water. So there are many different initiatives; the list goes on and on.

After 125 years of exceptional service for the public good, I am sure excited to say that the Ontario Geological Survey will continue its good work for many years to come.

ÉLÈVES AYANT DES BESOINS PARTICULIERS SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

M^{me} Gila Martow: Ma question est pour la première ministre. Malgré la relâche d'un an par le gouvernement, ce gouvernement continue à regarder les sourds et les aveugles de l'Ontario comme un moyen d'économiser de l'argent. C'est cruel. Le Centre Jules-Léger à Ottawa offre une éducation bilingue dans la langue des signes et en français. C'est la seule école bilingue pour les aveugles en Ontario. Si le gouvernement ferme cette école, il enlèverait 130 ans de sensibilisation pour les sourds en Ontario et surtout pour ceux et celles qui ont besoin de la langue des signes dans l'éducation des enfants sourds.

Est-ce que le gouvernement s'engagera à garder cette école et des écoles comme celle-ci ouvertes?

L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Ministre de l'Éducation.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Merci. We're back to talking about the provincial school and the demonstration school. In the case of Centre Jules-Léger, it serves both purposes. In terms of the demonstration school, we have reopened admissions for next year, as we have with all the demonstration schools. We are getting the report back now on how we address the issue in the future.

It's interesting that at Centre Jules-Léger, when you look at the children that attend the demonstration school there, about half of them actually come from northern Ontario. We really do need to consider how to serve not just the cluster of francophones who live in the Ottawa area, but also francophones who live in northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} Gila Martow: Je retourne à la première ministre. Des années de scandale, de gaspillage et de mauvaise gestion mènent cette première ministre à couper les services essentiels. Son action est en conflit avec la preuve qui indique que priver les enfants sourds de la langue des signes entraîne des retards linguistiques et cognitifs qui se prolongent jusqu'à l'âge adulte.

Après beaucoup de pression, la ministre de l'Éducation a été forcée de rouvrir les inscriptions pour 2016 et 2017 au Centre Jules-Léger à Ottawa. Ce fut seulement pour arrêter le rassemblement à Queen's Park le lendemain. Mais une année ne protège pas l'avenir de ces enfants.

Est-ce que la première ministre va s'engager à garder le Centre Jules-Léger à Ottawa ouvert pour l'avenir?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think that the member, in her question, has actually covered the issue, which is that we know that the work that happens in the demonstration schools, be they francophone demonstration schools or English demonstration schools, is highly effective in helping children who are multiple grades behind in the ability to read and that it actually is a very effective program at helping them learn the skill of reading, which is essential to everything else. We know that they are effective. That's not the issue.

The issue is that we have children all over Ontario who are struggling with the ability to read, and we need to make sure that the programs which will help those children to learn to read, in fact, are available throughout Ontario, either in French or in English, as the case may be.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Trinity-Spadina on a point of order.

Mr. Han Dong: I didn't get a chance to introduce four of my constituents here with us in the members' gallery: Mr. Hao Cheng Fan, Mr. Hong Ke Zheng, Ms. Sisi Liu and Ms. Shuai Chai. Welcome.

REPORT, CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the post-event report of the Whitby-Oshawa by-election from the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1208 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: This week marks national palliative care week, with the theme of "Hospice Palliative Care

First.” This is an annual awareness week organized by the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association. The purpose of this week is to bring awareness and education about end-of-life care in Ontario. There are still many myths that surround palliative care in Ontario, and this year’s campaign is to dispel many of those myths.

Palliative care is really about focusing on improving the quality of life for an individual and taking a holistic approach to focus on pain and symptom management.

In my riding, Elgin Hospice Palliative Care Collaborative and other organizations have been working over the last few years to not only bring awareness to palliative care in Elgin county and St. Thomas but also to create a residential hospice in the area. The need for a residential hospice does exist, and it’s my hope that the government is listening to the local concerns from my riding.

In 2014, Ontario’s Auditor General highlighted the dismal state of palliative care services in Ontario, which has resulted in inequitable access to palliative care, inefficient use of funding and a patchwork of varying services and standards across the province. Health Quality Ontario has estimated that only about 30% of patients get the palliative care they should. This need will only grow as the population ages.

Research shows that access to a palliative approach to care is better not only for patients but for the family. It reduces that stress on the patients and family, improves quality of life and patient satisfaction, and places less of a burden on caregivers.

I want to thank each and every health care professional who works within palliative care. Your work is not easy, and I commend you for what you do and for your dedication to our health care system.

MARYLYNN HOLZEL

Mr. Percy Hatfield: As you know, we’ll soon be celebrating Nursing Week in Ontario. Down in Windsor and Essex county, the RNAO has already recognized the efforts of one exceptional nurse. Marylynn Holzel is this year’s recipient of the Lois A. Fairley Nurse of the Year Community Service Award. This award, named after the late nurse, mentor and advocate, honours someone who has demonstrated a commitment to serving the community through excellence in patient care.

Ms. Holzel has been nursing for more than 30 years. She’s done it all, from medical-surgical, pediatrics and telemetry to ambulatory care.

Years ago, Marylynn lost a daughter, Holly, to sudden infant death syndrome. There were no SIDS bereavement groups in our region at that time so she went to the States, got the training, came home and started a SIDS chapter to assist other parents to get through the grieving process.

She’s been a volunteer manager and trainer for several hockey teams, a coach and team manager for the Amherstburg Soccer Association, and she’s busy these days with the Miracle League, helping those with physical and intellectual challenges enjoy their time on the baseball field.

Marylynn Holzel is described as kind, fun, hard-working, dedicated and a compassionate nurse. She loves her job and the people she works with. Her greatest joy comes from her patients. You’ll find her at the Ouellette campus of our Windsor Regional Hospital.

The annual award allows Windsor-area nurses to recognize someone who goes above and beyond, and also to honour the legacy of Lois Fairley, who had an immeasurable impact on so many lives in our region.

From the Ontario Legislature, congratulations to Marylynn Holzel, our nurse of the year in Windsor and Essex county.

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

Mr. Chris Ballard: On April 28, I was honoured to attend the National Day of Mourning ceremony in my riding of Newmarket–Aurora, organized by CUPE 905. Members of the community gathered to show their respect and remember all those who have died or have been injured simply because they went off to work.

CUPE 905 has created a beautiful memorial rock garden with cascading water at its headquarters in Newmarket. It’s such a moving location, Mr. Speaker, that members of the community stop by to add small rocks to the garden with the names of their loved ones who have died in workplace accidents written on them.

I doubt there’s anyone here in this House who hasn’t been touched in some way by a workplace death or injury. My father worked in manufacturing and I heard too many horror stories about friends and colleagues who had died or been injured at work.

The National Day of Mourning is not only a day to remember and honour those lives lost or workers injured due to a workplace tragedy, but also a day to renew the commitment to improve health and safety in the workplace and prevent further injuries, illnesses and deaths.

I offer my sympathies to all those who have lost a loved one in a workplace accident and to those who suffer ongoing injury or illness as a result of poor work environments. And I offer a heartfelt thank you to CUPE 905 for hosting this moving event.

INSURANCE FRAUD

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Organized insurance fraud is a serious problem that impacts the cost of insurance for all consumers. It’s estimated to cost upwards of \$1 billion in Ontario alone. A recent undercover investigation, widely televised, revealed staff at professional clinics encouraging and counselling undercover investigators to commit fraud. It’s shocking to see how some professionals, who should be protecting accident victims, are instead encouraging the undercover investigators to lie so they can submit phony forms and collect insurance payments for services never rendered.

A recent insurance association survey found that 69% of respondents believe there is fraud in the Ontario auto system. This systemic fraud is being carried out by those

who skirt the law, and results in higher premiums for consumers. It is unfair to honest, law-abiding Ontarians who play by the rules. It hits all of us in the pocketbooks. As much as 10% to 15% of injury payouts are fraudulent.

I urge the government to take real action to truly attack the root cause of this issue. On the organized auto insurance fraud front, reforms are needed to deliver benefits to injured claimants and not only service providers.

CLAIRE PRASHAW

Mr. Michael Mantha: I rise today on a little bit of a sad note. In my constituency office, I have Grant Buck, Vicky Arsenault and Cindy Haddow, but today I rise to recognize a really big part of my puzzle, and that's Claire Prashaw. She's my executive assistant that I have here and this is her last week that she's going to be spending with me at Queen's Park. She's moving on.

She's an amazing woman. She is a single mom raising a beautiful boy; his name is Cruz. I've often played with Cruz in my office—thrown popcorn, played a couple of puzzle games. He really likes my exploding washroom that I have in my office.

I have grown to not only respect Claire, but really love Claire. When I first got here, I was a little rough around the edges. Claire moulded me into what I am here today. She actually was on me for the last four and a half years to get to the gym. I've been at the gym now for the last eight weeks and it's thanks to Claire. But she's moving on, so her project with me is done.

When I sat down and had a chat with Claire, there were many people that came up to me and said, "Why are you choosing Claire?" My simple response to them was: "If she's good enough for Jack Layton, she's damn well good enough for Mike Mantha."

Claire, I'm going to miss you. I know you're sitting at your desk. I love you to death. You are my best friend that I've had here for a very long time. Good luck with your endeavours, and you're always welcome at suite 160 to come for a hug.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You told me I was your best friend.

ITALIAN FALLEN WORKERS MEMORIAL

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I rise in the House today to remember the over 1,000 fallen Italian workers who have lost their lives building our province.

Last April 28, on the National Day of Mourning for workers who have been killed or injured as a result of work, over 500 people, including myself and several members of this Legislature, gathered at Toronto's Villa Colombo memorial gardens to pay tribute to the victims of workplace accidents. There is now a permanent Italian Fallen Workers Memorial at this site, consisting of 11 metal columns engraved with the more than 1,000 names

of the victims, which will forever remind us of these lives that were taken too soon.

1510

The Italian Fallen Workers Memorial is the culmination of a six-year effort to formally recognize the enormous sacrifices of Italian workers in Ontario's construction and industrial development for more than a century. Many of them came here—to Sault Ste. Marie, to Toronto, to Welland—to work in the mines and on the hydro projects, canals, railways, roads, bridges, subways and skyscrapers.

Through the committed work of volunteer researchers, led by the project leader, Mr. Marino Toppan, the committee continues to uncover the names of victims of workplace fatalities of Italian origin.

I wish to thank Mr. Marino Toppan for his tenacity, and the entire committee, the volunteers and the donors for making sure that future generations know about the price paid by their fathers and grandfathers in building our beautiful province.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, I'm glad the Minister of Children and Youth Services is here.

I was both astonished and disturbed when I was informed that the partnership between my local school board and the Cordick treatment program was arbitrarily terminated. The Cordick treatment program helps at-risk youth gain the foundational skills they need to return and thrive in the classroom, and has helped over 600 students and is a model of success.

The Cordick program is a private company which receives its funding via student referrals to their program. However, it was revealed this week, during Children's Mental Health Week, that the funding for this successful treatment program has ended and the funds will instead be spent by another mental health agency to cover its operating deficit. They are balancing agency budgets on the backs of at-risk children. This is atrocious and shameful and happening in Ontario. What is also disturbing is that the director of the Upper Canada District School Board, Mr. Sliwa, and the mental health agencies refuse to meet with either myself or the Cordick program director to find a solution.

Speaker, I'll continue to fight to keep this treatment and therapy available for the children in my riding so that they receive the help they both need and deserve.

DOWNTOWN MILTON BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREA

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Last week I had the pleasure of welcoming Premier Wynne to my riding of Halton, and it was a wonderful visit that gave local residents a chance to speak directly with the Premier. For me, the highlight of the visit was sitting down for a

round-table discussion with our local downtown business improvement association. Members of the DBIA were able to discuss issues of importance to our community, including transportation, business challenges, and ways to grow the local economy. It was a fantastic conversation and gave everyone there a glimpse of the thriving arts and business communities in our growing town and the dedicated people driving our local economy. It was a great way to share ideas, and it really helped to show the DBIA that our government, all the way up to the Premier, is listening.

Thanks to the Sixteen Mile Arts Photography Gallery in downtown Milton for allowing us to use their beautiful space. The gallery's amazing photo exhibit was shot entirely on mobile phones, and it was amazing to see what can be done with a little talent and cellphones.

Mr. Speaker, the meeting was positive, and members of the Milton business community were very happy with the discussion.

Thank you to the Premier for engaging our community, and thank you to the Milton DBIA for their valuable contributions.

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Soo Wong: This month marks the 14th annual celebration of Asian Heritage Month, and I rise today to honour and recognize Asian Canadians who have enriched our province and our country with their achievements, contributions and vibrant cultures.

Notable Asian Ontarians who have made valuable contributions include Dr. Tak Mak, whose significant work in microbiology and immunology has influenced public health worldwide; Jean Lumb, the first Chinese Canadian woman and the first restaurateur to receive the Order of Canada for her community work; Raymond Moriyama, an internationally renowned architect whose designs are recognized locally and internationally; Tanya Kim, co-host of CTV's *etalk*; Charles Chi, an entrepreneur and the current chancellor of Carleton University; Wei Chen Yi, president of the Confederation of Toronto Chinese Canadian Organizations; Scarborough-Agincourt resident Jonathan Lai, a star badminton athlete and Quest for Gold recipient; and Wayson Choy, an award-winning author.

Throughout the month of May, Ontarians will have an opportunity to participate in various Asian Heritage Month festivities. This annual celebration preserves the rich Asian culture and heritage as well as promotes a better understanding between the different cultural groups. At the same time, it recognizes that Asian Canadians support Canadian values: mutual understanding, respect for diversity and multiculturalism.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of my Asian heritage, of having the privilege to serve my beautiful riding of Scarborough-Agincourt as MPP, and to be the first Asian woman to be appointed Deputy Speaker.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr42, An Act to revive 790186 Ontario Inc.

Bill Pr43, An Act respecting the Ismaili Centre, Toronto, the Aga Khan Museum and the Aga Khan Park.

Your committee further recommends that the fees and the actual cost of printing at all stages be remitted on Bill Pr43, An Act respecting the Ismaili Centre, Toronto, the Aga Khan Museum and the Aga Khan Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Carried.

Report adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Grant Crack: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 172, An Act respecting greenhouse gas / *Projet de loi 172, Loi concernant les gaz à effet de serre.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Carried.

Report adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (HELMET EXEMPTION FOR SIKH MOTORCYCLISTS), 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (EXEMPTION DE L'OBLIGATION DE PORT DU CASQUE POUR LES MOTOCYCLISTES SIKHS)

Mr. Smith moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 194, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to exempt Sikh motorcyclists from the requirement to wear a helmet / *Projet de loi 194, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour exempter les motocyclistes sikhs de l'obligation de porter un casque.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Todd Smith: Currently, section 104 of the Highway Traffic Act requires persons riding or operating a motorcycle or motor-assisted bicycle on a highway to wear a helmet. The bill exempts members of the Sikh religion who have unshorn hair and who habitually wear turbans from the requirement to wear a helmet.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK SEMAINE DE LA SANTÉ MENTALE DES ENFANTS

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I rise in the House today to recognize that this week is Children's Mental Health Week. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work, caring and understanding of those who love and care for children and youth with mental health challenges—their parents, siblings and other family members and friends—and I want to recognize the dedication and compassion of our mental health providers and partners, who diligently support young people with mental health problems, including our mental health service providers.

While efforts and inroads have been made in reducing the stigma around mental health challenges in recent years, there remains a reluctance in society to accept that many of us face mental health challenges throughout our lives. That creates a very real barrier that prevents young people from seeking help. That's why Children's Mental Health Week is so important, and why we need to keep talking about mental health in our communities, in our cities and across the province.

Across the province, our mental health and addictions strategy is making a difference as we provide faster access to quality services, identify and intervene earlier, and close critical service gaps for children and youth.

1520

In the first three years of the strategy, my ministry, together with the Ministries of Health, Education, and Training, Colleges and Universities have done the following:

We supported the hiring of 770 mental health workers in schools, communities, and courts.

We provided more than 2,800 psychiatric consults through video conferencing this year alone to benefit children and youth in rural, remote and underserved communities.

We launched Good2Talk, a free, confidential and anonymous helpline providing professional counselling, information and referrals for mental health, addictions and well-being to post-secondary students in Ontario.

We've established School Mental Health ASSIST, a provincial support team designed to help Ontario school boards promote student mental health and well-being.

But one of the most important changes we are making is to modernize the way mental health services are delivered to our children and youth in the province. We are working towards a stronger system that will get them the core support they need when and where they need it.

Nous travaillons à mettre en place un système plus fort qui va leur donner le soutien fondamental dont ils ont besoin, quand et où ils en ont besoin.

Recently, to support our Moving on Mental Health system transformation, we invested an additional \$6 million to hire more than 80 mental health workers across the province. That investment marks a milestone, and it was the first time our mental health lead agencies across the province were responsible for identifying and addressing the local needs in their communities.

For example, in Oxford county, the Oxford-Elgin Child and Youth Centre provides immediate access to single-session counselling services to children, youth and their families. Clients have had positive things to say about their walk-in services, with one family stating, "The clinic has provided an amazing source of support, understanding, and education, not only for the children, but for our family."

In London, Craigwood Youth Services and Vanier Children's Services have partnered to offer services in the form of walk-in clinics. Youth and family are able to attend a session in their home communities without the need for an appointment and can schedule further sessions on an as-required basis. This service was expanded through Middlesex county because of our investment. A weekly clinic will occur in Strathroy, and biweekly sessions are planned in Dorchester, Glencoe, Parkhill and Lucan. The response to the clinics has been very positive, and by the end of last year, Speaker, the clinic had served 1,455 children and youth, aged three to 18.

New programs like this are coming into action across the province because of the \$6-million investment. Because of the work of our lead agencies to consult with local partners, we find out where new mental health dollars could do the most good and then take action. They are doing fantastic work, and I'm confident of their ability to transform our community-based mental health system for the better.

Ils font un travail fantastique, et je suis sûre qu'ils pourront améliorer notre système communautaire de santé mentale.

It's also important that families whose son or daughter is having a mental health challenge find that information they need and get that quickly and easily. Our government's latest effort to support young people with mental health concerns and their families is the launch of a child and youth mental health directory as part of Health Care Options/Ontario.ca. This directory helps young people and their parents find information on local, government-funded mental health services and supports, so they can take the first step they need in getting help.

I'd also like to address what we're doing for indigenous communities around the province. A few weeks ago, with my colleague Dr. Eric Hoskins, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, I travelled to Attawapiskat.

While we were there, we spoke with community leaders and youth about the challenges they face and how we can support their mental and physical well-being. We are working urgently with indigenous communities and leadership on short-, medium- and long-term solutions to address the serious challenges facing indigenous communities and indigenous youth. Mental health workers are in the community right now, addressing immediate needs.

We're also investing in a youth regional coordination unit for Mushkegowuk Council, which will provide 24/7 mental health support and evening and night nursing clinical support.

Mr. Speaker, as individuals, as families, as communities, we all need to keep talking openly about mental health, to change the conversation and eliminate the stigma associated with mental health issues.

Our government will continue to work together with mental health workers, doctors, educators, indigenous communities, mental health associations, community leaders and so on, to make sure young people enjoy the bright futures they richly deserve.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's time for responses.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of my leader, Patrick Brown, and the PC caucus to recognize the first week of May as Children's Mental Health Week, but I do so with a bit of a heavy heart. I don't know how many of the members have read the Children's Mental Health Ontario 2016 report card that just came out a couple of days ago, but it tells a pretty disturbing story about children's mental health in the province of Ontario.

One in four children will experience some form of mental illness before they turn 18—one in four. It's critical that we identify the signs as soon as possible. I think some of the anti-stigma campaigns that we've all been involved in—Bell Let's Talk, Walk so Kids Can Talk—are very important, but quite frankly, as stigma decreases, access to care is decreasing, and we need to do something about that.

The report card said that since 2006-07, in the last 10 years, there has been a 54% increase in emergency department visits and a 60% increase in hospitalizations. I'm not sure how many of us have direct experience with individuals who have mental illness—I would suggest that many of us do—but emergency rooms are not where people need treatment and certainly are not where our children need to access treatment.

The Children's Mental Health Ontario report also talks about how there needs to be a comprehensive provincial plan for quality improvement within the children's mental health system—and I would add to that, the mental health system.

A number of us in this chamber sat on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, and the number one recommendation that we made was to have an overarching organization, similar to Cancer Care Ontario, that would allow people who are looking for service, who are looking for treatment, the ability to

access it regardless of where they live in Ontario. We still have a very disjointed system, and we still have a system that is not serving our children well.

I want members on all sides to read that report—because it's not from the Tories, it's not from the Liberals, it's not from the NDP. This is an organization that is helping children across Ontario, and they have some very important statistics and issues that they want to bring forward. We need to take this kind of information and transfer it into action.

There are a number of improvements. The demand for treatment centres has increased by 10% per year as mental health stigma falls. We're doing a great job on talking about it. Now we need the action side of it.

A youth's mental state actually deteriorates while they wait on a waiting list, causing hospital visits to skyrocket. I don't need to remind people that in the last number of weeks, we've been talking a lot about wait-lists; we've been talking a lot about access to care, and removing children over the age of five from access to IBI.

There are so many things that we, as a government, can do to make the system better, and I would suggest to you that two reports we can start with are the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions—look at some of those all-party recommendations and start acting on them—and the Children's Mental Health Ontario report that just came out two days ago, which talked about where we're failing and where we can do so much better. It would take a long time to go over all of the recommendations that they're making. The point is, we have the data, we have the information; now let's act.

1530

Miss Monique Taylor: As the NDP critic for children and youth services, I am pleased to rise today to recognize Children's Mental Health Week. On Monday evening, along with other MPPs, I had the great pleasure to attend Change the View, at the Royal Ontario Museum, hosted by the Youth Action Committee of Children's Mental Health Ontario.

I want to take my hat off to those youth who produced the powerful videos we saw. Through their art, they demonstrated the excruciating pain of mental illness. But they also offered a strong message of hope and belief that things can get better; that things will get better.

Conversations like this would never have happened when I was a teenager, but thankfully, we have a younger generation who are not afraid to speak the truth openly. Through their work, these youth are providing an invaluable service that breaks down the barriers. They set us loose from the stigma that has been historically attached to mental illness.

I offer my thanks to the organizers of this inspiring event and congratulate the winners, as well as everyone who submitted a video.

We should celebrate these achievements in Children's Mental Health Week, but there is a bigger picture, and there remains very much to be done, as CMHO's report makes very clear.

One in four children will experience a mental health issue by the time they are 18. Last year, CMHO spoke

about the growing wait-lists of our youth who are trying to access our mental health services. That problem hasn't gone away, but this year, they put a different focus on their report, and it's worth repeating today.

Since 2006-07, there has been a 54% increase in emergency department visits and a 60% increase in hospitalizations for children and youth seeking treatment for mental health issues in Ontario. This is a startling figure for our health care system, which we constantly hear is unable to meet the needs of Ontarians: hospitals—feeling forced to make cuts because of budgets that have failed to keep up with the increasing costs of health care. But it doesn't have to be this way.

The report card points out that with the proper investment in community-based mental health treatment, we can redirect 40,000 children away from hospitals. In fact, \$65 million put into community-based children's mental health centres will reduce wait times and ensure that kids receive timely access to the treatment they need. At the same time, this investment would save the province up to \$145 million in hospital costs. That is a powerful statement, and I sincerely hope that the government and, in particular, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Children and Youth Services, are listening.

The tragic circumstances in our First Nations communities are immensely disturbing and need to be addressed. Youth suicides and attempted suicides are of epidemic proportions. A recent newspaper article reported that governments are slow to respond when a state of emergency is declared, a situation that seems to be worse on reserves in Ontario.

Currently, there are 28 active states of emergency in Ontario. One was declared by the tribal council for the Attawapiskat area on June 1, 2010, six years ago. The most recent state of emergency was also declared in Attawapiskat on April 9 this year, after a suicide pact involving 13 youth was thwarted.

Vulnerable youth and children all across Ontario are in desperate need of help, and those who work for them are struggling to keep up. I constantly marvel at the work done by those who work with our children and youth struggling with mental illness.

The demand on their services, coupled with the shortage of funding, makes each day a challenge that stretches their resourcefulness to its limits. But somehow their dedication to those kids allows them to pull off miracles.

We can't continue to rely on workers going way beyond what should be expected of anyone. It isn't fair to them, and they are burning out. More importantly, it isn't fair to our kids, who so badly need the care and treatment that will allow them to build healthy, fulfilling lives. They certainly deserve better.

PETITIONS

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas demonstration schools in Ontario provide incredible necessary support for children with special education needs;

"Whereas the current review by the government of Ontario of demonstration schools and other special education programs has placed a freeze on student intake and the hiring of teaching staff;

"Whereas children in need of specialized education and their parents require access to demonstration schools and other essential support services;

"Whereas freezing student intake is unacceptable as it leaves the most vulnerable students behind; and

"Whereas this situation could result in the closure of many specialized education programs, depriving children with special needs of their best opportunity to learn;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately reinstate funding streams for demonstration schools and other specialized education services for the duration of the review and to commit to ensuring every student in need is allowed the chance to receive an education and achieve their potential."

I agree with this and will pass it off to page Faiz.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: Speaker, as you can see, petitions just continue to pile into my office, reading, "Don't Balance the Budget on the Backs of Children with ASD.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government recently announced plans to reform the way autism services are delivered in the province, which leaves children over the age of five with no access to intensive behavioural intervention...; and

"Whereas in 2003, former Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty removed the previous age cap on IBI therapy, stating that Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six; and

"Whereas applied behaviour analysis (ABA) and intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) are the only recognized evidence-based practices known to treat autism spectrum disorder (ASD); and

"Whereas the combined number of children waiting for ABA and IBI therapies in Ontario is approximately 16,158; and

"Whereas wait-lists for services have become overwhelmingly long due to the chronic underfunding by this Liberal government;

"Whereas some families are being forced to re-mortgage houses or move to other provinces while other families have no option but to go without essential therapy"—

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: Speaker, I don't think I've been heckled through a petition before.

"Whereas the Premier and her government should not be balancing the budget on the backs of kids with ASD and their families;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to immediately ensure that all children currently on the waiting list for IBI therapy are grandfathered into the new program so they do not become a lost generation."

I couldn't agree with this more. I'm going to affix my name to it and give it to page Samantha to bring to the Clerk.

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I've been getting these from all over Ontario. This particular one is from Freelon and Cambridge.

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

"Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, *Your Lungs, Your Life*, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on ... private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41" through to third and final reading.

I agree with the petition, affix my name and give it to Julia to bring to the table.

1540

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads and hospitals; and

"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

I approve of this petition. I will give it to page Laura. Thank you for the opportunity, Speaker.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Catherine Fife: This petition is entitled "Ontario Needs to Fund Family-Created Housing."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government's 2014 budget included a commitment to address the wait-list of more than 12,000 adults with developmental disabilities awaiting residential funding, and some of whom have been waiting more than 20 years; and

"Whereas since the spring of 2014 the number of adults with developmental disabilities awaiting residential funding has grown to more than 14,000; and

"Whereas there is currently no available funding to plan for a respectful transition from the family home to a home of choice in the community; and

"Whereas more than 1,450 Ontario parents over the age of 70 continue to provide primary care to their adult child; and

"Whereas currently adults with developmental disability must go on the crisis list before they receive residential funding, often resulting in a loss of choice, dignity and community; and

"Whereas family-created housing prioritizes dignity, choice and community inclusion for the resident living with disability as well as providing long-term cost savings for the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Minister of Community and Social Services to address the growing wait-list for adults with developmental disabilities awaiting residential funding and provide stable funding opportunities for family-created housing."

It is my pleasure to affix my signature and thank the parents for signing these petitions.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that community water fluoridation is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations, including the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Ontario Dental Association; and

"Whereas recent experience in Canadian cities that have removed fluoride from drinking water has led directly to a dramatic increase in tooth decay; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care urges support for amending the Fluoridation

Act to ensure community water fluoridation is mandatory; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing urges support for the removal of provisions allowing Ontario municipalities to cease drinking water fluoridation, or fail to start drinking water fluoridation, from the Ontario Municipal Act;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Premier of Ontario direct the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Health and Long-Term Care to amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario before the end of the first session of the current Ontario Parliament.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my name and send it to the table with page Benjamin.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Todd Smith: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

I’ll sign this and send it to the table with Isabela.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I would like to read a petition called “Better Mental Health Services.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas mental illness affects people of all ages, educational and income levels, and cultures; and

“Whereas one in five Canadians will experience a mental illness in their lifetime and only one third of those who need mental health services in Canada actually receive them; and

“Whereas mental illness is the second leading cause of human disability and premature death in Canada; and

“Whereas the cost of mental health and addictions to the Ontario economy is \$34 billion; and

“Whereas the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions made 22 recommendations in their final report; and

“Whereas the Improving Mental Health and Addictions Services in Ontario Act, 2015, seeks to implement all 22 of these recommendations;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Improving Mental Health and Addictions Services in Ontario Act, 2015, which:

“(1) Brings all mental health services in the province under one ministry, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

“(2) Establishes a single body to design, manage and coordinate all mental health and addictions systems throughout the province;

“(3) Ensures that programs and services are delivered consistently and comprehensively across Ontario;

“(4) Grants the Ombudsman full powers to audit or investigate providers of mental health and addictions services in Ontario.”

I support this petition and give it to page Julia to deliver.

TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Il me fait un plaisir au nom des résidents d’Ottawa–Orléans d’apporter cette pétition.

« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Attendu qu’il y a un besoin criant en infrastructure de transport routier dans la province de l’Ontario;

« Attendu que d’offrir différentes alternatives ou options dans le choix du mode de transport aux citoyens aide à réduire le nombre de voitures sur les routes;

« Attendu que les transports en commun contribuent à améliorer la qualité de vie des Ontariens ainsi qu’à préserver l’environnement;

« Attendu que les résidents d’Orléans et de l’est d’Ottawa ont besoin d’une plus grande infrastructure de transport;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Soutenir le plan Faire progresser l’Ontario et la construction de la phase II du train léger sur rail (TLR), ce qui contribuera à répondre aux besoins criants en infrastructure de transport à Orléans, à l’est d’Ottawa et à travers la province. »

Il me fait un plaisir d’appuyer cette pétition, de la signer et de la remettre à la page Emma.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician

services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

I agree with this petition, sign my name to it and give it to page Julia.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the provincial government has cancelled the Northlander passenger train which served the residents of northeastern Ontario; and

“Whereas the provincial government has closed bus stations and is cancelling bus routes despite promising enhanced bus services to replace the train; and

“Whereas the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission (ONTC) has been given a mandate that its motor coach division must be self-sustaining; and

“Whereas Metrolinx, the crown corporation that provides train and bus service in the GTA ... is subsidized by more than \$100 million annually; and

“Whereas the subsidy to Metrolinx has increased annually for the last seven years;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To direct the Minister of Northern Development and Mines to reverse the decision to cancel bus routes immediately and to treat northerners equitably in decisions regarding public transportation.”

I wholeheartedly agree and give it to page Isabela.

TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN

M. Shafiq Qaadri: J’ai une pétition ici qui m’a été fournie par ma collègue honorable la membre de l’Assemblée législative d’Ottawa–Orléans, intitulée « Faire progresser l’Ontario et appuyer la phase II du train léger sur rail (TLR) à Ottawa. »

« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Attendu qu’il y a un besoin criant en infrastructure de transport routier dans la province de l’Ontario;

« Attendu que d’offrir différentes alternatives ou options dans le choix du mode de transport aux citoyens aide à réduire le nombre de voitures sur les routes;

1550

« Attendu que les transports en commun contribuent à améliorer la qualité de vie des Ontariens ainsi qu’à préserver l’environnement;

« Attendu que les résidents d’Orléans et de l’est d’Ottawa ont besoin d’une plus grande infrastructure de transport;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Soutenir le plan Faire progresser l’Ontario et la construction de la phase II du train léger sur rail (TLR), ce qui contribuera à répondre aux besoins criants en infrastructure de transport à Orléans, à l’est d’Ottawa et à travers la province. »

Maintenant, je vous l’envoie avec le page William.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. Todd Smith: It’s a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon on time allocation that has once again made its way to the Ontario Legislature thanks to your Ontario Liberal government.

Speaker, the government has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on advertisements for the ORPP. That’s the bill that they have decided, once again, to introduce time allocation on to stifle debate in the Legislature, yet they’re using hundreds of thousands of dollars to get their message out. They’re not Liberal dollars; those are taxpayers’ dollars that they’re using to talk about the ORPP, which is the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. In those advertisements—you may have seen them—a man is staring at a creek and he’s wondering how he’s going to leap over it. We’re told that there is a large gap between retirement savings and what people are used to living on.

The funny part is that there’s an expert who has actually said that people only need an income at 70% of pre-retirement levels to maintain their standard of living. The reason for that, the expert wrote, was that retirees would have lower expenses than they had when they were working. Retirees typically have paid off their mortgage, their kids have left home; and they’re not driving to work, which means they’re spending less money on gas. We know all this because, prior to this expert entering politics, he was the head of one of Canada’s largest human resources and benefits firm. Now this expert is the federal Liberal finance minister.

In his book—which I recommend that everyone in the House get a chance to read because it’s the most articulate argument against this lousy program that one could read.

Hon. James J. Bradley: It’s out of date.

Mr. Todd Smith: It’s not out of date.

Bill Morneau, who is the federal Liberal finance minister, outlines that people—through their investments, their real estate and through government programs—have the necessary means to fund their retirement. The title of

the book is actually *The Real Retirement: Why You Could Be Better Off Than You Think, and How to Make That Happen*.

What some analysts have pointed out, and what the government has actually ignored in saying that there's a retirement crisis, is inheritance as well. That's another aspect. According to the Bank of Montreal, the baby boomers who have either recently retired or who will be retiring in the next few years stand to inherit approximately \$1 trillion over the next 20 years. The average inheritance in Canada is actually about \$56,000, which is more than those boomers—many of whom will never qualify for the ORPP—would ever receive under this program.

That's the amazing thing to me about this government. They ignore facts that they find inconvenient and then they spin a narrative totally divorced from the facts to try and make their argument. They actually ignore their own confidential cabinet notes that our finance critic, the member from Nipissing, was talking about during debate on this time allocation bill earlier this morning. The government runs around telling people who are soon to retire that the ORPP will leave them better off when the government knows that they'll never qualify for the ORPP—or the latest payroll tax.

The government ignores the fact that the biggest impact of this plan isn't going to be on big business. They're either going to automate their minimum wage jobs that big business has, they're going to move out of the province or the ORPP will factor in as a rounding error on their bottom line.

If your argument is, as the member from Timmins—James Bay's was earlier this morning, that the big guy is screwing the little guy, this won't actually hurt the big guy. The impact on this is wage growth for small and medium-sized businesses. Since the recession, that's where the wage growth has happened: in these small and medium-sized businesses.

There is a multitude of evidence out there that demonstrates no connection between executive compensation and the performance of a company—none. What the CEO of Salesforce said last week was that the next generation of successful CEOs is going to be caring more about consumers and employees than about their stockholders. In other words, they're going to be doing what small business owners do every day now: They're going to be paying their employees more, they're going to be working hard to retain good employees, and they're going to be more concerned with return customers than with the bottom line.

We've heard in this place that small business owners are the most opposed to the ORPP and that many employees of small and medium-sized businesses don't have a workplace pension.

By the way, for those who do, the most common workplace option in small and medium-sized business is in a group RRSP, which isn't considered a comparable plan under this legislation. So if your argument is that we're doing this to protect the little guy, I would

respectfully submit that your heart is probably in the right place; this legislation, though, isn't going to achieve that.

I'm a guy who believes that an honest day's work deserves an honest day's pay. What this is going to do is result in a smaller day's pay for every employee who is impacted. As has been well documented throughout the debate on the ORPP previously, your pay is going to be docked by 1.9% in a time when electricity rates are rising through the roof. People need every last bit of their paycheques, because it's getting more expensive to live in Ontario, thanks to this Liberal government.

If you want that honest day's pay, you're more likely to get it at a small or medium-sized business than you are anywhere else. This bill is the greatest tool devised by this government to suppress the wages of people who work in small and medium-sized businesses.

According to the Canada Revenue Agency, there were 11.7 million TFSA holders in Canada in 2014. That's up from 4.8 million in 2009. We're already seeing people taking control of their retirement future. All of these numbers, though, are inconvenient to this nanny state government that we have here in Ontario. I understand that.

Here's another one: 17% of Canadians with a TFSA max out their contributions. Among the income group making between \$20,000 and \$25,000 a year, over 124,000 of them are maxing out their contributions every year. That's 30,000 more than max out their contributions in the \$150,000-to-\$300,000 income bracket.

Some 60% of those who max out their TFSA make less than \$60,000 a year. If you suppress their wages, they'll stop saving to fund their own retirement, because they can't afford it. If you suppress their wages, they'll be unable to afford things that they need to live now, like hydro in their homes. They control how much they contribute to a TFSA, but the government controls how much they would contribute to the ORPP.

I'm a Progressive Conservative member of provincial Parliament. That means that I understand that consumers and employees dictate the success of a company, not the boardroom.

I know what this is going to do to the businesses who are pushing wage growth in this country. I know what this is going to do to employees who are already planning for their own retirement.

I know that the government's homework on this bill has been subpar—or, as we heard from the member from Nipissing earlier this morning, they've actually ignored their own studies that they've done into the effects of the ORPP, which indicate that they are going to be seeing job losses, in the area of 50,000 jobs lost.

For that reason, as well as many others, I'm opposing time allocation on this bill. That's why I'd like to move an amendment to the time allocation bill that we're debating here today, Bill 186.

1600

I move that the section beginning, "That the Standing Committee on Social Policy be authorized to meet at its regularly scheduled times" be struck out and replaced by:

That the Standing Committee on Social Policy be authorized to meet at its regularly scheduled times on Monday, May 16, 2016 and Tuesday, May 17, 2016, and on Monday, May 23, 2016 and Tuesday, May 24, 2016, Wednesday, May 25, 2016 and Thursday, May 26, 2016 in Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, London and Kingston for the purpose of public hearings on the bill; and

That the section beginning, "That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the Committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 186" be struck out and replaced with:

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the Committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 186:

—Notice of public hearings on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the Legislative Assembly's website and Canada NewsWire; and

—That the deadline for requests to appear be 1 p.m. on Thursday, May 12, 2016; and

—That the Clerk of the Committee provide a list of all interested persons to the subcommittee following the deadline for requests; and

—That a subcommittee member or delegate provide their selections of witnesses based on the list of interested persons received from the Clerk of the Committee by noon on Friday, May 13, 2016; and

—That each witness will receive up to 10 minutes for their presentation followed by nine minutes for questions from committee members; and

—That the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Thursday, May 26; and

—That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 12 noon on Friday, May 27, 2016; and

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay. Mr. Smith—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Dispense? Agreed? Agreed.

Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always a pleasure to stand in this House, but not so much on a time allocation motion. I understand we're debating the amendment, but still, time allocation on a bill about pensions? We're in favour of stable pensions, but rushing this through—which is basically a long-term-planning exercise for people's retirement—without listening to anyone, although it's par for the course from this government, is just bad government. It's completely bad governance.

I certainly hope that this government has very little to do with actually designing this pension plan, because their governance standards are very, very low. And they'd better book an appointment with the OPP.

We've had examples of this in the past. We were in favour of the Green Energy Act, the principle behind it. But a government like this rammed it through and voted against amendments that we put forward, and now we see the shambles that the Green Energy Act—not in principle, but the way it was implemented—has caused.

One of the biggest issues with the Green Energy Act—we voted in principle for the Green Energy Act but our amendments were voted down. The biggest problem with the Green Energy Act is that it was allowed to supersede all other acts. Municipalities had no power over it, so basically these wind turbines and solar farms are plunked willy-nilly wherever this government sees fit.

In the middle of the negotiations, all of a sudden this government sees that, whoa, this is maybe not a good idea for some of their friends, and they changed the game in the middle. This is a kind of game that we can't play—we shouldn't play it at all, but certainly not with people's pensions.

I always come back, whenever this government talks about pensions, to their ad, the ad with the guy who's facing the stream and the bridge, and he has to jump for the bridge. Again, it's a perfect picture for what they're doing here, because instead of taking the time to actually build the legislative, regulatory bridge so people can actually bridge over to their pension years, this government is again pushing something through, and there is no guarantee that it's actually going to work. That is an incredible shame. It's a crime.

We have the ability to do things right here. That government won a majority. They have the right to push forward their agenda, but there is the expectation that they push forward their agenda responsibly. There's time allocation after time allocation after time allocation of bills of which there are parts that we can agree to and that we can work together on, but even when you try to work together with this government on issues where we could come to some agreement, it's all for naught. That is the most egregious part of this whole thing.

When people elected the Kathleen Wynne government, they were electing a Premier who they believed was progressive, transparent and open, and was going to govern in a different way. Actually, she fulfilled that promise: She's governing in an even more tight-fisted way than Premier McGuinty ever did. But it wasn't the difference that people voted for, and this is a prime example.

She ran on pensions, something that should be done responsibly and that people could actually put their faith into. Again, they're shutting the door on debate and shutting the door on working with people who actually study this stuff and actually know the pitfalls. They're shutting the door. That's an incredible travesty, and that's why we will be voting against this time allocation motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm honoured to join in the debate after my colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane, who raised some very important points. This is a principle that our leader not only supports, but she has introduced legislation in favour of presenting or creating an Ontario-based pension plan. So, absolutely, we support the idea, but very much like the member from Ti-

miskaming—Cochrane pointed out, this government has a very bad track record of rushing through legislation, not addressing serious concerns and creating additional problems. Closure motions and time allocation motions are not the appropriate way to govern. This government should learn.

Today, we've learned that there is an additional OPP investigation of a government scandal, and it all points, again, to this government's lack of thoughtful, principled and evidence-based due diligence with respect to making a decision. Instead, they make decisions based on their own self-interest.

What do we find when a government makes decisions based on self-interest? In the case of the Liberal government, self-interest leads to police investigations. This is not the right way to govern. This is not an appropriate way to deal with legislation. This is not an appropriate way to deal with the honour and dignity of being the governing party of a province.

Now, I would expect any governing party to understand that the majority that you have is something you wield with great care and diligence, and with great thoughtfulness when it comes to something as important as the ORPP.

The government is going to claim there is a delay tactic here. First, let's understand the fact that this implementation of the ORPP is not going to be within a couple of months; it's not going to be within a year; it's going to be many years in the future. So the process in and of itself, the way the government designed it, is going to take a long time. Any suggestion that additional hours of debate are going to delay a law which is already set to begin many years in the future is a very weak argument. It's an argument that does not hold up to a logical scrutiny. So, first, that criticism is a bad criticism. It's inherently flawed.

When it comes to the benefit of debate, we know that this government has rushed through legislation. Very recently, I was the Chair of a committee where we were dealing with a government bill, and the government had introduced numerous amendments to address mistakes that they found in their own bill. I'm glad the government took the time to address those mistakes, but that's the reason why you don't rush through legislation. You can find mistakes before you rush it through to the next stage. Let's take the time to make sure things are done in a thoughtful manner. And much like the Chair of committee had mentioned in the past, when other governments brought forward time allocation, time allocation is the ceasing or the stopping of democracy. It arrests democracy. It prevents discussion from happening in this chamber.

1610

It's very curious that this same member is now saying, "No, time allocation is the way to go. It's the appropriate way for us to deal with legislation. It's the right way to govern," but at another time it was considered very anti-democratic by the very same member. That's very curious, Mr. Speaker. It causes one to wonder, maybe

laws or rules are different when you're in power and when you're not in power. That is not a very principled way to conduct oneself. If that's the belief of the member, I would say that is also not a very strong argument to make.

I am proud to share my time with my colleague to very proudly indicate our intention to vote against time allocation on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Last call for further debate.

Seeing none, Mr. Naqvi has moved government notice of motion number 65.

Mr. Smith has moved that the motion be amended as follows—

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Dispense. Is it the pleasure of the House that the amendment carry? I believe the noes have it.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed?

I think the noes have it.

This will be a five-minute bell—a 10-minute bell.

We're now going to defer this until tomorrow after question period.

Vote deferred.

HEALTH INFORMATION PROTECTION ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA PROTECTION DES RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LA SANTÉ

Mr. Hoskins moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 119, An Act to amend the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, to make certain related amendments and to repeal and replace the Quality of Care Information Protection Act, 2004 / Projet de loi 119, Loi visant à modifier la Loi de 2004 sur la protection des renseignements personnels sur la santé, à apporter certaines modifications connexes et à abroger et à remplacer la Loi de 2004 sur la protection des renseignements sur la qualité des soins.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Hoskins.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Halton.

It gives me great pleasure to lead off third reading debate of Bill 119, the proposed Health Information Protection Act, 2016, but before we get started, I'd like to acknowledge that I will be sharing my time with my colleague the member for Halton. I specifically want to thank her for her dedication and hard work on this very important piece of legislation. I also want to thank all of the stakeholders who took part in the public hearings and who provided their feedback on the proposed legislation before us today.

We listened very carefully to what they had to say and made changes where necessary to strengthen the proposed bill. Bill 119 follows up on a commitment that I made to the people of Ontario last June to protect the

personal health information of patients while also increasing transparency and maintaining quality in Ontario's health care system.

The proposed legislation, if passed, will create stronger and more comprehensive protection of health information privacy, it will renew our provincial e-health privacy framework, it will provide for greater accountability and transparency in the health care system when it comes to privacy breaches and, finally, it will improve patient care and safety.

Our government made a commitment to the people of Ontario through our Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care. We made a commitment to put people and patients first, and this bill is one more way we are keeping that commitment.

Taken together, these legislative amendments would reinforce Ontario's position as a leader in the protection of health information privacy. The old days of being able to lock away health records in a filing cabinet have long since passed. Increasingly, the health care system has been moving to electronic records, and for good reason. Electronic health records help us to modernize our health care system and lead to better care.

Our current privacy laws have done a great job of protecting patient privacy, but as we enable the sharing of electronic health records between health providers in a patient's circle of care, we need new rules in place to safeguard patient privacy. Quite simply, we need to update our health information privacy rules for the 21st century. This is what these proposed amendments will do. If passed, this bill would make it mandatory for health information custodians to report privacy breaches to the Information and Privacy Commissioner as well as to relevant regulatory colleges under certain circumstances.

Ontarians want to know that their personal health records are private and safe, and it is my expectation that all health information custodians who are in possession of personal health information are doing everything they possibly can to ensure that that privacy is protected. By mandating that privacy breaches be reported to the Information and Privacy Commissioner and to regulatory colleges, the individual health information custodian, and indeed the entire health care system, will be able to benefit from the IPC's review and recommendations for avoiding future breaches and identifying suspected privacy offences.

We also need to ensure that we're prepared to address the issue, should a breach of privacy offence occur. Currently, there is a six-month limitation period from when an offence is alleged to have taken place to when a prosecution must commence, which may prevent people from being charged for all the privacy offences they may have committed. That's simply not right. The bill before us today proposes an amendment that, if passed, will completely remove that six-month limitation period.

The Personal Health Information Protection Act, or PHIPA, would also be aligned with other provincial offence statutes that require the Attorney General to consent to the commencement of a PHIPA prosecution,

rather than requiring the Attorney General to actually start the prosecution herself.

Another way we propose to deter privacy offences is by strengthening the punishment for offenders. If passed, there's an amendment that would double the maximum fines for PHIPA convictions from \$50,000 to \$100,000 for individuals and from \$250,000 to \$500,000 for organizations.

Finally, we propose to reintroduce privacy protections for electronic health records, as were first proposed in 2013 as part of Bill 78. These proposed protections were endorsed by the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and we agree that they would help us further strengthen the protections that are already in place for the sake of all Ontarians.

But privacy is just one side of the health information coin. The other side of that coin is how we go about ensuring transparency in the health care system itself. That means ensuring that key information should be appropriately shared with the people who matter most: the patients. For this reason, our government is proposing to replace the Quality of Care Information Protection Act, 2004, with a new act of the same name.

The act as it exists right now was put in place to provide health care workers an opportunity to share information candidly regarding a critical incident and to promote continuous quality improvement. But we have come to understand that health care providers are often unsure as to what must be disclosed to patients and their loved ones following a critical incident review. There is also a lack of understanding as to when and how providers should apply QCIPA—the legislation—in those particular circumstances.

1620

It was for these reasons that I convened a QCIPA review committee and committed to implementing all of their recommendations. I recognized that all of the committee's recommendations were intended to help ensure consistent, high-quality, safe and patient-centred care.

Our government understands that it's important that health care providers are able to review information following a critical incident for quality improvement purposes. But this should be done in a manner that respects the rights of patients and the rights of families to know about critical incidents in hospitals and other health care settings.

The new QCIPA legislation, if passed, would maintain the existing quality information improvement framework, but, at the same time, would provide greater clarity and help encourage better communication with, and engagement of, patients during the investigation of a critical incident itself.

If passed, the amended legislation would:

- clarify the purpose of the legislation, of QCIPA, and reaffirm the right of patients to access information about their health care;

- clarify that certain information and facts about critical incidents cannot be shielded from affected patients and their authorized representatives;

—allow the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to make additional regulations that would require health care organizations to adopt a uniform approach when using QCIPA to review critical incidents;

—clarify that QCIPA does not interfere with health care facilities' legal obligations to disclose information required by law, or to interview patients involved in a critical incident as part of an investigation; and finally,

—require that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care review this act every five years.

If passed, Bill 119 will provide, on one hand, more security and protection for the personal health information of Ontarians and, on the other, ensure the necessary transparency and access to information that they deserve, and that we have the obligation to provide, to make the right decisions about their health care.

Mr. Speaker, I call on all members to support our proposed amendments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Halton.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I rise today to speak further on what the Honourable Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, has said about our proposed Health Information Protection Act, 2016. I want to start by thanking the minister for the opportunity to speak to this very important piece of legislation for the people of Ontario.

Among the points I am going to speak to today is the importance of protecting patient privacy. A person's personal health history is among the most personal information about them. It is of the utmost importance that we do everything we can to make sure that it is protected.

As Minister Hoskins just outlined, one of the goals of the bill before us is to safeguard and protect the health information of Ontario patients. That is a direct reflection of the commitment our government has made to the people of Ontario to put patients first.

We know that Ontarians expect their personal health information to remain private, and we believe that the privacy of personal health information is paramount to a high-quality health care system in which people are held accountable. There is a clear understanding between a patient and a doctor that the information they share is strictly confidential, and trust that the information will only be shared in accordance with the law and when it is in the best interests of the care of the patient.

However, in recent years, we have seen instances where this has just simply not been the case. We have seen it happen that personal health information has been illegally breached for financial gain or, in some cases, just to satisfy someone's personal curiosity. Regardless of the reason for the breach, it is unacceptable. Not only is it an invasion of privacy, but it's scary what can be done with stolen medical information. It also jeopardizes the delicate balance of trust between a patient and their health care provider.

Health care providers see patients when they are at their most vulnerable. Health care providers see patients

when they're in need of care for an injury, illness or disease, and health care providers see patients when they need a helping hand. I know that when I'm seeing my doctor, I need to be able to trust her, as well as her staff, in order to feel comfortable. All Ontario patients need to know that the information they share with their health care provider is going to be kept confidential and secure and will not be used inappropriately. I'm sure all of us here would be terribly upset to find out that our health care records, or those of our loved ones, became lost or stolen.

The government is taking strong action to put an end to this possibility. Bill 119, as proposed, is intended to help protect the personal health information of patients. The Health Information Protection Act would amend the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, and several other pieces of related legislation to strengthen and clarify the privacy rules that protect the personal health information of individuals. This includes amendments to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991; the Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee Act; and the Narcotics Safety and Awareness Act, 2010.

The amendments to these acts support the appropriate collection, use and disclosure of personal health information. They would enable the sharing of that information by means of the electronic health record, a province-wide system that allows certain information and health records to be shared among health information custodians. This would allow medical records to be shared between health care providers quickly and timely, but within a strictly controlled and secure system. An e-health record would definitely bring our health care system into the 21st century and make Ontario a leader in health technology and services.

If passed, these amendments would make it mandatory to report certain privacy breaches to the Information and Privacy Commissioner and to the relevant regulatory college of the person responsible for the breach. It would also strengthen the process to prosecute offences under PHIPA by removing the requirement that prosecutions must be commenced within six months of when the alleged offence occurred. This allows more time for a proper investigation and closes a loophole that would have allowed those who commit a security breach to go unpunished.

I spoke moments ago about the vulnerability of patients when their personal health information is breached. When that happens, it damages the trust that exists between the patient and their health care providers, and that is when the patient expects action to be taken. Failure to do so would only damage that relationship of trust and their faith in the health care system even further. We have a responsibility to take action to better protect patient privacy. These proposed amendments effectively give the government the tools to do just that.

In my riding of Halton, the new state-of-the-art Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital opened its doors just a few months ago. This amazing facility is able to provide care to as many as 180,000 people in Oakville

and surrounding areas. That's a lot of people, Mr. Speaker. And the changes the government is making to Bill 119 will allow me to assure them that their private information will, in fact, remain private.

I'd like to point out that the Information and Privacy Commissioner was an essential partner in the development of these amendments. The commissioner fully supports the legislative changes to strengthen privacy protections and improve Ontario's ability to pursue prosecution. In fact, the commissioner has stated that he is strongly in favour of the mandatory reporting of certain privacy breaches. He was also one of the key stakeholders that Minister Hoskins was referring to who were instrumental in helping us refine the proposed bill through the standing committee process. We thank him and his office for their valuable contributions and their continued support.

We know many hospitals and other health care providers have voluntarily and proactively contacted the commissioner's office when they discovered that a privacy breach has taken place in their organization. It speaks to how seriously hospitals and health care providers treat breaches. It also speaks to how important that relationship of trust is between a patient and their health care provider, and their commitment to putting patients first. Our government thanks them for their dedication to their patients and their privacy.

1630

But reporting is just the first step in protecting the private and personal health information of patients in Ontario. We need prevention measures. We need to actively discourage people from even considering violating the privacy of someone's personal health information. That is why Bill 119 proposes to create stronger deterrents against the unauthorized protection, use or disclosure of personal health information.

To do this, the amendments would double the maximum fines for offences under the Personal Health Information Protection Act. Penalties would increase from \$50,000 to \$100,000 for individuals and from \$250,000 to \$500,000 for an organization. By increasing the maximum fines, we are sending a clear message that it is unacceptable to unlawfully access anyone's personal health information.

We are also ensuring that those who are convicted of a privacy offence face significant consequences from the court for their actions.

One of the key pieces of Bill 119 that I want to elaborate on today is that it proposes to reintroduce and update the electronic health record privacy framework, initially introduced in the Electronic Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2013, or EPHIPA. As many of us may recall, EPHIPA had reached second reading but had not passed when the Legislature was dissolved on May 2, 2014. This is our chance today, and we have an opportunity to finish what we have started.

Not only does the proposed legislation incorporate the work begun on EPHIPA, but it also builds on its privacy protections to create a stronger and more comprehensive

health information privacy framework. We know that most Ontarians who receive health services have some form of electronic medical record. In fact, over 12,000 health care providers either have implemented or are in the process of implementing electronic medical record systems for patient management. This includes 80% of Ontario's family physicians, who represent over 10 million people. It encompasses many different types of medical records, including diagnostic types of images, immunization records, lab reports and hospital discharge reports. This will modernize health care and ensure that records are passed on to the appropriate people quickly and with security. It will help ensure that health care providers are fully informed so they can provide and give patients the best care possible.

What Bill 119 proposes to do is build a strong foundation for enabling records to be shared among health care providers in a safe and secure fashion. It is something that the Information and Privacy Commissioner has endorsed, and it will help us to protect patients' personal health information and preserve the relationship of trust. This is vital to good health care. Patients need to know that when their records are being shared, they are being done so in a way that does not place their personal privacy at risk. As Minister Hoskins mentioned earlier, the ability to share electronic health records plays a big role in helping to modernize our health care system, leading to better care for patients. It enables us to share information faster and help patients get the answers they need sooner, and leads to a better health care coordination and integration.

That is why this bill also proposes to allow information about a patient's narcotics and monitored-drug prescriptions to be available to their health care practitioner. This would help to ensure that health care providers have all the information they need about a patient so that they are fully informed as they work to provide the best care possible. It would improve patient safety by reducing negative drug interactions with monitored drugs and support more informed health care decisions. In addition, it could also reduce instances of patients obtaining multiple prescriptions for monitored drugs or multiple pharmacies filling the same prescription. I think that most Ontarians would agree that those are worthy goals.

Our government is committed to taking action to protect the personal health information of Ontarians and to ensure that we have a safe and secure way of sharing that information to offer the best care possible to all patients. It is an important part of our commitment to transform our health care system into one that puts the needs of patients at its centre. People in Ontario deserve to know that they are protected by a health care system that is transparent and keeps their personal health information private.

While the protection of health information is important, the aspect of privacy around personal health information is but one side of the coin when it comes to the proposed bill before us. The other side of the coin is how it speaks to the proposed health information act and

how it would help us to make great strides in improving transparency and patient safety in Ontario's health care system. The proposed legislation before us would enable us to do just that, while ensuring that we maintain the high quality of health care Ontarians have come to expect.

In 2004, this Legislature passed the current Quality of Care Information Protection Act to encourage health care workers to share information candidly regarding a critical incident. The idea is to promote continuous quality improvement by encouraging health care workers to share their experiences with other providers and work together to improve patient care.

The reason for the act is to encourage health care providers to be as forthcoming as possible when a critical incident occurs. It does this by ensuring that opinions, speculation and information specifically prepared for discussions about quality improvement, which may include information from investigating critical incidents, are protected from disclosure in legal proceedings. They would also be protected from most other disclosures—subject to appropriate exceptions—to ensure transparency to patients.

Speaker, the proposed bill before us today seeks to replace the existing act with a new act of the same name. After all, it can sometimes be unclear to health care providers what they must disclose to the patient following a critical incident review, and when and how they should be applying QCIPA in these instances.

Again, this speaks to this very important commitment that our government has made to the people of Ontario: our commitment to put patients first. We cannot meet that commitment if health care providers are unclear about what information they are required to share with patients.

There is confusion among some health care providers about how to use QCIPA effectively. But there is also a lack of clarity about the greater need to share experiences and lessons learned about quality improvement opportunities across organizations. That is why it's so important that we put in place this proposed new act. Not only will it provide greater clarity for health care providers, but it will also improve the sharing of information between those providers, so that we can, in turn, improve the quality of our health care system, because that is the ultimate goal: to provide better care to Ontario patients. So we need to get this right; in fact, we must get this right.

If passed, the Health Information Protection Act will replace the existing QCIPA with a new act of the same name, which would clarify the purpose and appropriate application of this legislation. It would maintain the existing quality improvement framework, while providing greater clarity to health care providers. It would help to encourage better communication with, and engagement of, patients during the investigation of a critical incident. Just think about how important this is.

It would also reaffirm the right of patients to access information about their own health care. It would make it

clear that QCIPA cannot be misused to shield information from patients and their authorized representatives, by linking the act to proposed amendments to the Public Hospitals Act's regulation 965. These proposed amendments, if approved, would spell out for everyone what information and facts about critical incidents in hospitals must be transparent and shared with affected patients and their authorized representatives.

Our government believes that the default in our health care system with respect to critical incidents should be to disclose the essential information about the incident to the affected patient and their family. That includes the facts of what occurred, whether the causes were known and what steps are being taken to prevent such an incident from ever happening again.

To our proposed amendments: This will help to make it clearer that QCIPA can never be a barrier to such disclosures. What the proposed new QCIPA legislation will do is clarify the purpose of QCIPA and reaffirm the right of patients to access information about their health care.

Patients have a right to know about what happened, and this bill will clarify exactly what information and facts about critical incidents must be available to be shared with affected patients and their families. It will allow the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to make regulations that will keep the approach to using QCIPA consistent across the provinces.

These regulations would require health care facilities to adopt a uniform approach when using QCIPA to review critical incidents. Patients need to know that when a critical incident is under review, it is being done to the same high standards, regardless of where they live or where the facility is located.

1640

The proposed act will also facilitate the investigation of critical incidents that involve multiple health care facilities. It will clarify that QCIPA does not prevent health care facilities from properly disclosing information as required by law or from interviewing patients involved in a critical incident as part of an investigation.

I want to point out that the proposed amendments are only part of the picture of how our government is taking steps to implement the recommendations of the QCIPA review committee. We are also proposing to amend the Public Hospitals Act, regulation 965, and we are working with the Ontario Hospital Association and Health Quality Ontario to provide guidance and training to health care facilities on reviewing critical incidents, including those under QCIPA.

Our government is also working with Health Quality Ontario to create a way for public hospitals and health care facilities to share their experiences with critical incidents and improve learning to prevent future incidents.

We are creating an additional way for patients to file complaints. This will be available through the office of Ontario's first-ever Patient Ombudsman. Patients will be able to submit complaints about the health care received to the Patient Ombudsman.

The proposed QCIPA amendments before us are just one part of our government's commitment to address the recommendations, but they represent a significant improvement for patients in Ontario.

Ontarians need to be able to trust their health care system. They need to know that it is working for them. That is why this proposed legislation is so important. It is a message to the people of Ontario that when you have questions related to the quality of the health care you are receiving, you can get answers. It is a message to patients and their families that they will be kept informed and have their voices heard when an investigation is required as a result of a critical incident. That's what patients want. It is what they expect; it's what they deserve.

Today, I ask this House to pass this proposed legislation to help our government improve transparency and strengthen accountability in our health care system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'll be splitting my time with the member from Oxford and the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. I got that one right; that's great.

I'm proud to stand up and give a little bit of discussion regarding Bill 119 during third reading today. Hopefully, my remarks will be listened to by the government. The member from Oxford and the member from Lanark will follow with some great remarks.

What astounded me throughout this process of Bill 119 was that we brought forth amendments and had quite a bit of debate in this Legislature and at committee, raising red flags to fix gaps and/or problems that have arisen. We heard from many groups and stakeholders, who gave their insight into how they thought this bill could be improved. As members of the opposition, we brought forth those amendments in committee to be voted upon. In fact, there were 33 amendments brought forward during committee, which is a good number considering the average bill that I am a part of in discussing at committee. Fifteen of those passed.

What's discouraging is that the 15 that were passed were put forward by the government. Not a single opposition amendment was passed at all during the committee process. That's quite discouraging, considering we're trying to deal with the bill and ensure that the gaps are fixed so that we don't have to come back and fix the bill again, like we're having to do right now with Bill 178, the smoking legislation out there. The government missed a section of Bill 45 because they rushed through legislation. They didn't seek the proper input and forgot a section that needed to be dealt with. It was going to turn into a problem throughout the province once Bill 45 was enacted, so they had to come forward with Bill 178.

It's concerning that this is typical of how this government is operating. They listen to themselves and that's about it. They don't listen to the opposition parties—their amendments brought forward. They're not even listening to stakeholders who are at committee to make changes so

we don't have to return to this House and either fix this bill or replace it because of a court challenge or because they're finding that what they've created is in itself causing many problems.

We do so to ensure that the people of this province have trust in what this government, this body, is producing as legislation in the province. I heard that quite a bit in the discussions from the government side over trust in the system, trust with the doctors. It's concerning that today they speak about building trust with the health care professionals, but two weeks ago, the health minister stood in front of many cameras and tried to erode that trust between patients and doctors by negotiating through the media over their impasse with regard to billings, and trying to either split the profession or put the profession in a poor light so that patients would, in fact, be less trustful of their doctor. That's unacceptable behaviour, the fact that today they talk about trust and two weeks ago they didn't talk about trust.

In fact, we even could go even further down the road. I think we're all in agreement with regard to the doctor who lost his licence due to his sexual abuse, sexual touching of patients and the fact that he's going to get his licence back in six months, even though it was flagged by the government over a year ago that the College of Physicians and Surgeons wanted some legislative authority in order to deal with that situation so that doctor would never get his licence back. In 14 months—I understand they had a task force struck. I'm not sure what the mandate is, but it's interesting that the government can act quickly when it feels like it and it's a priority to them, but when it's not, it's not a priority for them. It's the same issue with trust. Today they talk about the trust they have with patients with this bill; however, they challenged the trust of doctors two weeks ago.

I don't think that is the proper way to go forward as a government. I don't think it's the proper way to create legislation. The fact that not a single opposition amendment was given due consideration at the committee level speaks volumes that this government thinks that it got the legislation right. It would probably be one of the first times.

We already heard about the Green Energy Act and the problems that that has caused with regard to rural Ontario. We've got wind turbines being set up throughout southwestern Ontario where, Mr. Speaker, you and I are from, and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex is from, and Sarnia-Lambton and Oxford. Municipalities are saying no to these wind turbines, but because of the act the government put forth without having true consultation or listening to the amendments—because the third party mentioned in their speech that they put forth amendments to the Green Energy Act, to make changes to ensure that what's happening today wasn't going to happen. I don't know why they still voted for the Green Energy Act after the government said no to all of their amendments, but that's something we can't fix right now—possibly until a new government is in place to actually deal and bring

back support to rural Ontario and incorporate them as part of Ontario in making decisions on legislation.

While at committee, I found it was quite a frustrating process to hear the different groups come forward, first of all saying that they weren't consulted in the first place in the drafting of this legislation, which I found very interesting, and then, after the drafting of the legislation, coming to committee, sharing their concerns, their points, and the government completely ignoring the fact that this is going to affect them in a negative light.

This isn't going to make the health care system operate any better than it is today. I also believe that this legislation, although they speak big on accountability and transparency, is not going to add the accountability that patients in our health care system are asking for today. Unfortunately, they had the opportunity to make the changes, make the amendments, and they didn't listen to what the opposition parties were saying, let alone the stakeholders.

I could go through a little bit of the amendments that we put forward, just to put on the table here in the Legislature; they are in Hansard and committee.

1650

Our first amendment that we brought forward dealt with HIPA. In the event of a breach, our amendment would have given a prescribed organization the responsibility to notify the individual if it happened at their level. The OMA brought that concern forward. They wanted to ensure that doctors and health care providers aren't going to be the ones to have to notify patients of breaches that they didn't have involvement in. If a breach happened elsewhere in the system, they wanted to ensure that it wasn't the doctors who had to call up the patients and say, "Hey, look, there was a breach." Even though they had nothing to do with it, they're going to have to take the fall for it.

I think that's a valid point that the OMA brought forward. The comment from the government side is that the amendment wasn't necessary, in their point of view, and, "Let's move on," and "We're okay having the doctor make the phone call for someone else's mistake down the road." Our doctors, I think, are hard workers in this province. We want them to be seeing patients and dealing with health care services in this province. We don't want them to become the secretaries for somebody down the road who has made a mistake with a breach of information. I don't think they have the time of day to do that. If they made the mistake, if they had the breach, definitely, they need to make the call and tell the patient, but if it's someone else in the system making that, I don't believe the medical profession needs to do that.

Just look at how privacy breaches are increasing: In 2014, there were 439 cases that were reported to the privacy commissioner. That doesn't mean that's all there were; those were the ones that got reported. As information technology continues, the ability to breach information is going to increase, and I imagine there will be more of an increase in the amount of breaches going forward.

Our next amendment aimed at ensuring that the language in the bill is consistent with the reporting provisions in the Health Professions Procedural Code of the Registered Health Professions Act and the Public Hospitals Act. The College of Physicians and Surgeons brought this up, saying that we need the same language in this bill to match the other laws that are in place. It actually makes the workings of this legislation a little bit easier for the health care system, especially our colleges, as long as the wording is the same.

However, the government, again, believes that they're dealing with the situation without amending it and that it would interfere with the reporting of professional misconduct. If we have the College of Physicians and Surgeons concerned about this issue—they're the ones that deal with professional misconduct, and deal with it day in and day out. The Ministry of Health doesn't, and they'll say so, day in and day out, that it's a hands-off organization, which it should be, but they should also at the same time be listening to the concerns brought forward by that body who is dealing with it day in and day out.

We had another amendment to ensure that a multidisciplinary advisory committee can raise issues from various aspects of the health care sector to ensure that, on changes of direction that the ministry may be headed in, it is hearing all sides of the story. It doesn't make sense to keep coming back and fixing things. If the minister creates this advisory committee but only includes certain groups at the committee, they could be making regulations and changes to this law when it's in place and having to come back because they missed a health care professional body that this negatively affects.

The government's comment was that it was vague and undefined—what our amendment was about. Our amendment spelled out "multidisciplinary," but it was too vague. So we came back with another amendment, because we know they don't listen to our amendments at all. We said, as a minimum, to have the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the College of Nurses, the OMA and members from the public, and then you could add whoever you want afterwards. At least that gave you a basis to cover. Then they said it was too specific and we'd left out groups. The government is obviously—their whole point at committee is finding the ways to argue against our amendments and not include them, instead of trying to make a stronger bill. Unfortunately, that's not the way we need to go.

One amendment we had put forward which we had concern with—the OMA flagged it for us, as well—was the fact that with the passage of this bill, the Ministry of Health bureaucrats, or whoever the Minister of Health decides, will have access to our personal health information. To me that's a concern. I know they said it will be modified in a way so that you can't connect the dots, but with computers today, I'm sure you could find a way to fix that.

The privacy commissioner himself said he's okay and he's going to be part of the system, but he could not

guarantee 100% that a breach would not occur. Our question is, why create that chance? We only have to look at what occurred—the access to health information is out there—with the late Rob Ford, who obviously had his personal medical information broken into.

I'm not saying that anybody in the bureaucracy or the government here today is going to utilize that personal health information from any Ontarian that they can now get access to in a bad light, but we can't guarantee that that's never going to happen. I think that if the people of this province, realized that government in general—especially this government—has access to your personal health information, that's going to be a concern.

The OMA's point, which they clarified, is that that might deter someone from discussing their issue fully with the doctor. It should be in confidence, to ensure that their information is not shared. We only have to look at the stigma that's out there for mental illness today. We're trying to fight to end that stigma. We do not want any barriers put in place to people accessing the health and treatment that they need. There's a trust between a doctor and a patient that this government is trying to erode, but there is no trust between government and patients with regard to medical health information.

It's a concern. There have to be other ways. There's a lot of bureaucrats in the Ministry of Health; I'm sure they could probably come up with a different way to collect the information they need other than actually accessing the personal health information of somebody, and having that opened up in the bureaucracy of the Ministry of Health and/or whoever the minister appoints. We were quite concerned about that.

When the government commented on that amendment, the government messed up their talking points and read us the wrong response. We know that they sit there and find ways to argue why we—the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington was the one who called them out on it. They immediately backtracked and found the right page to read about why they won't support that amendment. It's very, very concerning.

You'll hear from this government that the privacy commissioner is on board, but as I said earlier, he cannot guarantee 100% that there will be no breaches or misuse of the information once the government has their hands on it.

Another amendment we had was to add some oversight and to give the privacy commissioner some leeway in order to ensure that when they review any matter before them and decide to act on a possible contravention, a review can take place and those who have been involved are notified of what occurred during the decision related to the activities. It could undermine the trust in confidentiality.

They just finished saying that patients are now going to have access to find out what's going on and what's wrong, but in actuality, they're still going to be blocked. We had a member of the public come in who wanted access to medical information as to why their loved one died. They're in the courts fighting it. This was an

opportunity in this bill to allow them some more access than what they're getting today. The government says that they've made that access, but in fact, they voted down the amendment that would have given that access to those family members.

1700

As I wrap up my comments and let my caucus mate speak: So many stakeholders came in to speak after the fact. Again, we have another bill brought forward from this government who didn't pre-consult. We had at the table stakeholders who brought us well-thought-out amendments. The government rejected every single amendment from those stakeholders brought forth by the opposition members.

It's frustrating to go to committee when dealing with these members. We believe the amendments that we put forward would have strengthened the bill. We imagine that down the road either a court challenge will overturn this bill and/or we'll be back to fix problems and gaps that this process created due to the lack of co-operation from this Liberal government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Before we continue debate, I recognize the Minister of Energy on a point of order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Thank you, Speaker. I do rise on a point of order. I'd like to clarify a comment made in the House earlier today, in question period.

During this morning's cut and thrust in the course of answering a question in question period, I used a word that might be interpreted to be an offensive slang word, Mr. Speaker. Hansard has corrected their draft transcript, and if my pronunciation was unclear and it appeared as though I said something I did not, I would like to offer an apology to the leader of the third party. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is a point of order and members do have the opportunity to correct the record. Thank you.

Point of order?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: No.

Interjection: It's Ernie's turn.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Sorry. I thought it was someone else.

Continuing with debate, I recognize the member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 119. When people go to their health care system for help, they should be confident that their information will be protected. Someone who is struggling with a major disease shouldn't have an additional stress of worrying that their personal and private information could be released. People who need help shouldn't avoid the health care system because they're worried someone will find out there was a problem. But in Ontario, under this government's watch, it is happening.

This bill actually creates new opportunities for that to occur, Mr. Speaker. This bill will give the Minister of

Health and the Ministry of Health access to our personal health information. The Information and Privacy Commissioner has already said that the safeguards they are proposing for this information may fail. Our caucus put forward a number of amendments in committee to make this bill better and ensure that personal health information was protected. We heard about a number of those amendments from my colleague the previous speaker. But the government voted down every single one. They also voted down every amendment put forward by the New Democratic Party. The people of Ontario want us to work together, but this government is more interested in politics than our ideas to make the health care system better.

Privacy of medical information is a real issue in Ontario. In 2014, there were 439 cases of health information privacy breaches reported to the Information and Privacy Commissioner. And those are just the cases we know about, because it isn't mandatory to report when there have been privacy breaches. This bill would amend the Personal Health Information Protection Act to require mandatory reporting. It is a change that has been needed for years. Ontario is one of the last provinces to update the legislation to require mandatory reporting of the breaches.

In fact, the Information and Privacy Commissioner has been ringing alarm bells for years. Two years ago, he issued an order in response to two breaches of patient privacy involving allegations that hospital employees disclosed the personal health information of mothers for purposes of selling registered education savings plans. According to the articles, contact details for about 8,300 patients had been given to private companies to sell RESPs. In that order the Information and Privacy Commissioner said, "Personal health information is considered to be among the most sensitive types of personal information, deserving of the highest protection. Yet, in Ontario, we have seen a growing number of cases of agents inappropriately accessing the personal health information of individuals." That was over two years ago. How many more people have had their information released since then?

And that wasn't the first warning sign. In 2011, Cancer Care Ontario had a number of packages containing personal test results go missing. In one office alone, the missing package contained personal information of almost 2,400 individuals. The doctor reported in April that they hadn't received the packages, but it wasn't until June that the privacy commissioner was informed.

In 2008, health records were found on the street outside a medical centre which contained a medical laboratory. The pages contained names of patients and doctors, health cards and the results of laboratory tests. The Information and Privacy Commissioner was notified not by the laboratory who had the breach, but by a member of the media. It turned out that the records had been put in recycling instead of shredding and had then fallen out of the recycling truck when it was leaving the parking lot.

Clearly, there's a problem, and the government has been ignoring it for years. Over that time, thousands of

Ontarians have had their personal medical information accessed inappropriately. In fact, when the government ignored all of the warnings last year, the Information and Privacy Commissioner launched his own campaign, called *Is It Worth It?*, aimed at educating health care professionals on the impact of privacy breaches.

In the release, he said, "Whether out of curiosity, personal gain or simple concern about the health of friends and family, snooping through medical records can have devastating consequences for patients, health professionals and the health system as a whole."

Mandatory reporting should have been put in place years ago. It took thousands of breaches, warnings from two Information and Privacy Commissioners and a Toronto Star series to get the government to take action, a fact that was made clear in the newspaper article which said, "Following the series of Star investigations into PHIPA, Health Minister Dr. Eric Hoskins vowed sweeping changes to the act in June."

The government has consistently mismanaged the health care system, from people's personal health information to the services they depend on. They need to act to put patients first when it comes to protecting their information and when it comes to providing quality care. Putting patients first means providing the services that are needed and ending the mismanagement that is draining dollars away from patient care.

We need a system that is efficient, effective and focused on providing the best health care services when people need them. Part of having an efficient system is using updated technology. This bill not only updates the rules regarding privacy breaches for electronic records, it also contains changes to the electronic health record privacy framework.

As we all know, eHealth is not an area that has been managed well by this government. In 2009, the Auditor General released a report that said \$1 billion had been spent on eHealth and very little had been accomplished. It was said in earlier debates on this bill that the total is now up to \$2 billion—\$2 billion—and what do we have to show for it?

In his report, the Auditor General found that millions had been paid out to consultants in questionable circumstances. One million dollars was paid to an external recruiting firm for help in filling 15 management positions. It was a sole-source contract given out by the CEO. Only five of the positions were filled when the contract was terminated, but the company still got paid the full \$1 million. A consultant hired by the ministry was involved in giving \$1.4 million in contracts to his own company. The ministry subdivided contracts to keep them below the level where they would have had to put them out to public tender.

People may not remember this, but when eHealth was created in 2008, the agency's mandate was to have electronic health records in place for Ontarians by 2015. Well, Speaker, it is now 2016, and eHealth progress reports make it clear that there are still many Ontarians who don't have electronic health records.

According to the eHealth Ontario website, “Eventually, EHRs will include data from hospital information systems, community care clinics and other providers as well”—eventually.

We still don’t have the efficient system we were promised. I heard from one person recently who went to a hospital for a test. On her first visit, she provided her health card and all her information. They issued her a white hospital card. On the day of the test, she expected to check in and go quickly, since they already had all her information. Instead, it took 40 minutes because she was required to provide all the information again to get a blue hospital card in addition to the white hospital card and her health card. It took a health card, two cards from the same hospital and a hospital bracelet to track one patient who was in the hospital for three hours. That’s the reality in Ontario today, more than \$1 billion later. People may not be able to comprehend \$1 billion, but they understand the impact. They see the cuts to the services and health care. They know how long they and loved ones are waiting.

1710

I hear often from my constituents that the system just isn’t working. Necessary surgeries are being postponed because there isn’t enough funding to pay for them. Delays are having a real impact on people like the senior in my riding whose cataract surgery was delayed until four months after her driving test—obviously, she didn’t have her licence any more, Mr. Speaker—or the people in constant pain who are given the news just before Christmas that they would have to wait until April, because of the new fiscal year, before they could get their surgery. I’ve heard from qualified surgeons who are frustrated because state-of-the-art operating suites are sitting empty but they aren’t allowed to perform more surgeries.

We need to do better to make the health care system work for the people of Ontario and to make sure that their information is protected. This government has had an opportunity to do that by supporting our amendments, and it is now an opportunity missed, to the detriment of the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It’s a pleasure to speak to Bill 119 today. But, first, I do want to comment, reference and recognize that I appreciated that the Minister of Energy came down and was attempting to either correct a record or to make some sort of apology for some of the comments during, as you say, the “thrust” of question period—

Interjection: “Cut and thrust.”

Mr. Randy Hillier: —the “cut and thrust” of question period this morning. It is interesting, though. In correcting the record—many of us heard a word, and it supposedly was a different word than what we heard. “Pee” and “she” may sound similar, but the minister did say that his pronunciation maybe was not proper, and “she” sounded as “pee.” But we take him for his word.

But I find it disturbing that these single-syllable words cause the minister such trouble in his pronunciation, especially when his name is Bob, as well. I don’t know how often he gets the pronunciation of that name incorrect, as well.

But, anyway, it is nice to see that there was some sort of backhanded apology to the leader of the third party. I’m sure that she appreciates that. But I’ll have to go back and listen. I know that I saw the video. David Reevely, the reporter from the Ottawa Citizen, has a nice video clip on his Twitter feed—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member is really—how would I put it?—getting personal. I would suggest that he get back to the bill and lay off the present approach. Thank you.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. Your guidance is always appreciated and well-known and recognized in the House.

Speaker, back to Bill 119: I listened to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in his 10-minute address. There is much of it that I agree with. I think that the government has made tremendous strides in one part of the bill, and that is on the privacy side of the bill. We know that there has been a host of breaches of privacy, especially with medical records, and it does need to be fixed up—of course, the big case with Rob Ford. But there have been many, many cases of a breach of private medical information. I think that they’ve done a pretty good job on that section of the bill.

However, they—both the minister and the parliamentary assistant—like to use the term “the flip side of that coin.” They used the term “transparency.” I would say that it is better to use “determination of fact.” That is where they have missed out on this bill substantially. I know the parliamentary assistant, the member from Halton, was at the committee. She was the talking head for the Liberal Party on that committee and had her prep notes. But I know that she heard, significantly, from delegations to that committee about where the bill fails and where it will have negative consequences and, indeed, harmful ones, and that is on these critical incident review committees and the QCIPA, where patients, and the counsel for patients, will have difficulty getting information about a critical incident. It may be impossible to get.

That’s the message we heard at the committee hearing—if the member from Halton remembers—that this will be a significant disadvantage for any individual who may unfortunately have a critical incident, an injury, during a medical procedure. Their ability to find out what actually happened has been prejudiced by Bill 119. Bill 119 is very much prejudicial to those people.

I remember speaking at that committee hearing. The member for Beaches spoke out and said, “Go away, go away. This is all good. Don’t worry about it.”

I said to him, “I hope nothing serious or detrimental ever happens to you or your family and you need to seek remedy through the courts for something that may happen.”

The development of public policy and the drafting of law is serious business. It's not just about talking points. It's about people's lives. It requires significant deliberations, significant and thoughtful conversations, and diligence and attention to detail, to get it right. If we don't get it right, people get hurt. People get harmed. People are reduced, without remedies, for failings.

That's what we have seen time and time again with this government. They view the legislation, they view the law, as a photo op, as a plaything, something that they can just advance and talk about, and have somebody parrot a few lines, a few bullet points, a few slogans. But at the end of the day, it affects people, and we need to get it right.

We saw, this morning, time allocation on the ORPP. We saw time allocation on cap-and-trade. We see time allocation all the time. We also see a refusal by this government to accept honest, forthright representations at committee.

Our critic for health, Mr. Yurek, was speaking about the amendments that were advanced—amendments from the Ontario Medical Association, amendments from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, people whose business it is to conduct themselves under these laws. We heard their concerns. Amendments were drafted. Each and every amendment offered up and discussed was rejected out of hand once again by the Liberal government. If they don't bring the amendment in, if they don't bring the legislation in, it's no good. It is irrelevant, it's insignificant, it's unimportant.

We know that this bill, Bill 119, is the result of court decisions that said the existing legislation was faulty. It did not provide enough protection. We owe it to the courts, we owe it to the public and we owe it to ourselves to get it right so it doesn't come back again and again and again for review, which we see so often.

1720

But this government seems to have this absolute fear of any scrutiny, and they miss scrutiny. Scrutiny provides understanding. That's what it does: It provides knowledge and understanding of what the legislation means. They also have this absolute fear of criticism, but we know that no government succeeds—no democracy succeeds—without scrutiny, without criticism. That's what makes us better. That's what makes our legislation better. That's what makes our laws better: criticism and scrutiny.

We know what types of governments don't like scrutiny. We know which governments don't like criticism. We can't allow that attitude and that culture to take root here in our province and here in our Legislature.

Bill 119 has some good elements, but I do not feel comfortable supporting Bill 119, Speaker, because of the prejudicial aspects of it for those people who need remedy in the courts for a critical incident or a serious incident that happens to them in our health care system.

There is much that needs to be fixed in health care. I fear that this one is just going to add another problem. It's going to take one problem away and add another

problem in. We're going to see the courts come back and condemn some of the aspects, because that QCIPA aspect of this bill is contrary to what the courts are looking for. It's absolutely contrary to where the courts are telling us that the law and justice are found.

There needs to be transparency. There needs to be able to be a determination of fact. It can't be shielded; it can't be hidden. But Bill 119 will shield and hide facts from those who have been injured.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? Questions and comments?

Seeing none, further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: This is an incredibly important debate that we're having here today. It may be eclipsed by some other drama in the House, but what we need to be focused on is that this piece of legislation, if we don't get it right, will have a devastating impact on the people we're elected to serve—in this case, those people who have to make use of our health care system.

Our critic on this, the member from Nickel Belt, spoke at length about the importance of getting Bill 119 right. She made the strongest point around how this piece of legislation is connected to us. She said, "The problem is that each and every one of us will be impacted by this bill. We have to get it right. If we get it wrong, we will do immense damage to our health care system."

This all goes back to trust. It goes back to trust in the system in many respects, actually, for those of us who have been following the legislation. Its first reading was September 16, 2015, second reading was February 18, 2016, and its third reading is before us. The amendments put forward by both the NDP and the PC caucus were not received well by this government, which is disappointing, because there are long-standing issues around privacy in the health care system.

It is important to do our due diligence and to craft a piece of legislation which is responsive to the needs of the population. We have many examples, actually, of not getting pieces of legislation right. In fact, the Smoke-Free Ontario Act has to come back to the floor of this Legislature because the government failed to put in four words. Those four words are "and other prescribed substances." They didn't do their due diligence, they didn't do a thorough consultation, and it means that you crafted a flawed piece of legislation.

It was disappointing that the amendments were not received as they should have been. I think in good faith that we're trying to make sure that the interests of patients, the system as a whole and the integrity of the health care systems are maintained. This piece of legislation is playing catch-up, because right now the way that our Personal Health Information Protection Act is written is way back from 2004.

In 2004, electronic health records were in their infancy. You could get your name, your OHIP number and your address electronically, but everything else was on paper. We've seen a massive change in the way that information is stored, the platforms information is stored on and the amount of personal information that is out

there in the health care system. A lot of it is very personal. If you've ever experienced a breach of trust, a breach of information around your own personal health, it's a complete violation for you, for your family and for your children.

Here we are. We are in 2016 catching up from a very dated piece of legislation going back to 2004. We need to move forward; we need to get it right. What can we do to better protect the health information that is shared between patients, caregivers, clients and health providers, and how do we do that better? This act takes a number of steps to bring us there and it will talk about who is responsible for keeping the information safe, but how can we as clients, as patients, decide who has access and who does not have access? Quite honestly, I've heard from the government side of the House two of the speakers, including the minister, mention that information should be shared with people who matter most, and that would be the patient, the client of the system, if you will. Having access to this information is key to continuous improvement.

We have so many examples. As I was researching to speak to Bill 119, I was genuinely surprised to see how many breaches of privacy have actually happened in the province of Ontario. Some of them have been well known. Former speakers have talked about the privacy commissioner calling for prosecution over the Rob Ford privacy breach; this is from the Toronto Star on March 25, just over a year ago. Obviously, it made the news because it was Rob Ford, but ultimately, at the time—this was a father. He was a husband. He was well known in the community, but he was a patient of the system and he had rights that were violated.

Ontario's privacy commissioner called for the two health professionals who had allegedly snooped into former mayor Rob Ford's medical records to face prosecution. "If the duo is convicted, this would mark the first successful prosecution under the province's health privacy law, which came into force more than a decade ago." That's the part that I want to focus on. It took 10 years to make a piece of outdated legislation actionable. Why was that?

I think the weaknesses that were contained in the first QCIPA should resonate with all of us. Really, it's a call to action. Let's get this right.

"The only other health privacy breach case to have reached the courts in Ontario's history was effectively dismissed recently, after a judge ruled the delay getting to trial was unacceptable for the accused." This was justice denied because it took so long to get to the court system.

1730

So you have breaches of privacy in the health care system; you have justice denied because it takes so long. It's really interesting because the Ministry of the Attorney General, "the sole authority with the power to launch a prosecution under the Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA) said the government would not comment 'unless and until a charge has been laid.'"

Really, there is a delay in having justice followed through on, quite honestly. Yet the flip side, which is fairly interesting as well, is that you have people who want access to the data and the stats around health care. This most recent article was just published by the Toronto Star. Of course, a lot of this came about because of the investigative reporting that was done by the Toronto Star into hospitals that were refusing to reveal the critical incidents that happened in their hospitals. Some of them actually did a very good job. I think it was Toronto East General that came forward and revealed everything—because when you investigate critical incidents, you have an opportunity to learn from them. When you learn from them, you have an opportunity to strengthen your system.

What we have now—this story was just from last week, from Diana Zlomislac, who is a news reporter. She's done an evaluation of "Cancer Care Ontario 'Covering Up' Casualties by Hiding Stem Cell Data, Critics Charge." This raises the question: What sort of information should the public have access to and what should they not? In this instance, "Critics decry a 'cynical abuse' of privacy law to avoid revealing how many people fell off the transplant list because of a system breakdown."

Why is it important for us to be raising this issue in today's debate? It's that we are trying to get a sense of how the system is responding to the health care needs of the people in this province.

The article goes on to say, "Just how many of Ontario's sickest patients fell off a controversial, \$100-million waiting list for life-saving stem cell transplants in US hospitals is a secret Cancer Care Ontario said it is 'committed' to keeping." The question is, does Cancer Care Ontario have the right to keep this information from us as legislators, or from the general public who pays for the system? This is a perfect example of that tension that exists in the health care sector.

There are some people, including some lawyers, who feel very strongly that this information is ours to have. It doesn't reveal personal, private medical records, but it will tell us the story of how Ontario's system is not responding to cancer care, in particular, allogeneic stem cell transplants.

Amir Attaran, who is a professor in the faculties of law and medicine at the University of Ottawa, says very clearly, "They're covering up. It is a cynical abuse of privacy law, to shield a callous and incompetent agency from disclosing how many Ontarians its inattention and bad management have killed. Simple as that."

This is somebody who feels very strongly that Cancer Care Ontario has no right to hold onto this data. But right now, Cancer Care Ontario is protected by a government that gives Cancer Care Ontario the right to withhold this information. That's why getting Bill 119 is so important.

"Ontario's privacy commissioner also took issue with Cancer Care Ontario's rationale." And you have to remember Ontario's privacy commissioner is an independent officer of the Legislature. This is what Brian

Beamish told the Star: “It is not apparent to us how patients would be identifiable from a raw number in these circumstances.”

“Beamish consulted with Cancer Care Ontario before the government agency doubled down on its decision to withhold statistics on patients who relapsed or died while waiting for an American stem cell transplant.”

Most people are incredibly surprised to find that citizens in this province have to go to the United States to access this life-saving treatment—they genuinely are—because of the costs associated with going to the United States, but also the bigger question—and having access to the full data would help us figure out why Ontario hospitals are not able, not funded, not resourced or don’t have the mandate to fully respond to this particular kind of treatment.

“An ongoing Toronto Star investigation revealed that since the fall of 2015, more than 200 Ontario patients with various forms of blood cancers, such as leukemia, and immunologic disorders were referred by Ontario hospitals for out-of-country care because of a systemic capacity crisis in the province.” That’s the key piece, Mr. Speaker.

“There are too many patients in need of” these “stem cell transplants—new immune systems, essentially, delivered through donated bone marrow or stem cells—and not enough beds, staff or funding to offer equal-access urgent care.”

Having the full dataset, though, and all of the information to holistically look at who these people are—what communities they come from; how long they have been on a wait-list; what kind of cancer they have; how long they have been in treatment; what costs they are bearing themselves, as patients, within our so-called universal health care system—this is the information that I would be interested in, not to point fingers at this hospital or that administrator or even this ministry. It would be to solve the problem, to bring a policy in place that actually is responsive, so that people do not have to travel to the United States, including children. Tomorrow we’re going to be debating the terrible experience that children have when they suffer through cancer.

The holding-on of the information, the power that some organizations have to protect or to put up a wall around information, is a very important democratic discussion and debate that we are having in the province of Ontario. Certainly, for those of us who want to have this information, to inform policy going forward, that wall is very thick, and those walls are very high.

Then you have, on the flip side, information that is revealed without the appropriate protection and support—clinical, personal health information, like what happened to Rob Ford, where there was no system in place to protect the integrity of that health care experience for that patient. That is why Bill 119 is a personal story. That’s what I’m trying to bring to this debate today.

It’s interesting, on the stem cell data: “International standards dictate that patients requiring such a transplant generally get one within three months of their initial

diagnosis, for the best chance of success.” This is from the same article, Mr. Speaker. “Canada’s largest cancer centre, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, formally shut its doors to new stem cell transplant patients in March” of this year—last month—“because its wait-list for treatment had grown to eight months.

“A spokeswoman for the hospital confirmed that 147 of its patients have been referred for US transplants in the past seven months.”

We need to get to that information. It’s just not good enough that we know that it’s 147. We need to know the circumstances as to why the system is not responsive.

“The Ontario government has approved 191 patients for funded transplants in Buffalo, Detroit and Cleveland at a cost of roughly \$500,000 (US) per patient. Only 19 people have received the treatment so far.”

This story is a very sad story, because one of the patients, Sharon Shamblaw, had to wait so long that, really, she got bumped off the list again. She wasn’t able to get the treatment in the US—or in Ontario, where, quite honestly, she should be able to get the treatment. She shouldn’t have to wait on a wait-list to go to the United States for this kind of surgery.

“The government’s contract permits US hospitals to treat only patients who are in remission from cancer”—the only way you get into remission from cancer is that you at least have some quality treatment to hold the cancer back—“even if doctors believe a transplant is still a curative option. Shamblaw was ordered back to Ontario. She is in palliative care at home,” and obviously the prognosis is not good.

What you have here is Cancer Care Ontario, funded by the Ministry of Health, able to not give us the full dataset that we all deserve to fully understand. We agree with Ontario’s privacy commissioner, Brian Beamish. He has, for good reason, challenged this decision.

Bill 119 will not rectify this situation. When you read through this piece of legislation—I’ve called it, and several other people here have called it, “selective transparency and accountability” associated with this.

The stats that we have, unfortunately, are somewhat anecdotal because these are doctors who finally came forward. One of them was from Hamilton. Three doctors finally said, “You know what? It goes against our oath of ethics to continue on this way.” They spoke out, and I commend them for doing so. For more than a decade, physicians at Princess Margaret, Juravinski Hospital in Hamilton and the Ottawa Hospital, the only three Ontario centres equipped with highly specialized staff and space to provide these kinds of treatment, have warned Cancer Care Ontario that this crisis would happen without immediate intervention. The crisis is here. Why deny the information? Let’s look at all the data. Let’s find a solution. Let’s make sure that people in Ontario have the access to universal health care that they’re supposed to have.

I mentioned the investigation which prompted the review that has been going on for almost—I think it started two years ago. When we were on finance, we had a woman come in—and the thing is, the human side of

these issues is so painful. The woman who came in—her mother had passed away very quickly, very suddenly. She suspected a breach of treatment. She is still, five years later, fighting to find out what happened to her mother.

That's part of the grieving process which never ends. It never ends because you need answers so you can have closure. You need answers and you need the data so that you find justice. We need access to some information about the system so that we can move forward and change the system because I think we all agree that this health care system in Ontario can be stronger and more responsive.

Sending patients to the United States at half a million US dollars does not make sense. There has to be a solution. The legislation is so old that we have to acknowledge that this will address some issues. But unfortunately the amendments we put forward were not well received, as I mentioned, by the government. There was a time when legislation could be made stronger at the committee level because there was a genuine interest in shaping legislation which was actually strong. I think that those days are gone. It's unfortunate, though, because there's no doubt in my mind that Bill 119 will be coming back to this Legislature, and we will have to fix it at that point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Seeing none, Mr. Hoskins has moved third reading of Bill 119, An Act to amend the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, to make certain related amendments and to repeal and replace the Quality of Care Information Protection Act, 2004. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I thought I heard a weak no there.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

This will be a 30-minute bell.

We have a deferral. This will be voted on tomorrow after question period.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Orders of the day.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Attorney General has moved adjournment of the House. All in favour?

Is it the pleasure that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1744.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiles, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cookville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Scarborough–Rouge River	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉ PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith, Monique Taylor
Glenn Thibeault
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yvan Baker
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Toby Barrett, Han Dong
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Peter Z. Milczyn
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Lisa Gretzky, Ann Hoggarth
Harinder Malhi, Jim McDonell
Eleanor McMahon, Lou Rinaldi
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Cristina Martins
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
Robert Bailey, Wayne Gates
Monte Kwinter, Marie-France Lalonde
Amrit Mangat, Cristina Martins
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Randy Hillier, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Laurie Scott
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Steve Clark
Granville Anderson, Robert Bailey
Steve Clark, Vic Dhillon
Sophie Kiwala, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahon, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Chris Ballard, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Joe Dickson, Jennifer K. French
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Lorne Coe
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Marie-France Lalonde, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Continued from back cover

Family Service Ontario

Mr. Vic Dhillon.....	9077
Hon. Helena Jaczek.....	9077

Autism treatment

Mr. Michael Harris.....	9078
Hon. Liz Sandals.....	9078

Hospital funding

Mme France G��linas.....	9079
Hon. Eric Hoskins.....	9079

Ontario Geological Survey

Mr. Glenn Thibeault.....	9079
Hon. Michael Gravelle.....	9079

  l  ves ayant des besoins particuliers / Special-needs students

Mme Gila Martow.....	9080
Hon. Liz Sandals.....	9080

Visitors

Mr. Han Dong.....	9080
-------------------	------

Report, Chief Electoral Officer

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	9080
------------------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / D  CLARATIONS DES D  PUT  S

Palliative care

Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	9080
---------------------	------

Marylynn Holzel

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	9081
-------------------------	------

National Day of Mourning

Mr. Chris Ballard.....	9081
------------------------	------

Insurance fraud

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	9081
------------------------	------

Claire Prashaw

Mr. Michael Mantha.....	9082
-------------------------	------

Italian Fallen Workers Memorial

Mrs. Laura Albanese.....	9082
--------------------------	------

Children's mental health services

Mr. Randy Hillier.....	9082
------------------------	------

Downtown Milton Business Improvement Area

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris.....	9082
-------------------------------	------

Asian Heritage Month

Ms. Soo Wong.....	9083
-------------------	------

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMIT  S

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris.....	9083
Report adopted.....	9083

Standing Committee on General Government

Mr. Grant Crack.....	9083
Report adopted.....	9083

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / D  P  T DES PROJETS DE LOI

Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Helmet

Exemption for Sikh Motorcyclists), 2016, Bill 194, Mr. Smith / Loi de 2016 modifiant le Code de la route (exemption de l'obligation de port du casque pour les motocyclistes sikhs), projet de loi 194, M. Smith

First reading agreed to.....	9083
Mr. Todd Smith.....	9084

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / D  CLARATIONS MINIST  RIELLES ET R  PONSES

Children's Mental Health Week / Semaine de la sant   mentale des enfants

Hon. Tracy MacCharles.....	9084
Ms. Sylvia Jones.....	9085
Miss Monique Taylor.....	9085

PETITIONS / P  TITIONS

Special-needs students

Mr. Jim McDonell.....	9086
-----------------------	------

Autism treatment

Miss Monique Taylor.....	9086
--------------------------	------

Lung health

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry.....	9087
---------------------------	------

Privatization of public assets

Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	9087
------------------------	------

Services for the developmentally disabled

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	9087
-------------------------	------

Water fluoridation

Mrs. Cristina Martins.....	9087
----------------------------	------

Health care funding

Mr. Todd Smith.....	9088
---------------------	------

Mental health and addictions services

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	9088
------------------------------	------

Transports en commun

Mme Marie-France Lalonde.....	9088
-------------------------------	------

Health care funding

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	9088
------------------------	------

Ontario Northland Transportation Commission

Mr. John Vanthof.....	9089
-----------------------	------

Transports en commun

M. Shafiq Qadri.....	9089
----------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Time allocation

Mr. Todd Smith	9089
Mr. John Vanthof.....	9091
Mr. Jagmeet Singh.....	9091
Vote deferred	9092

Health Information Protection Act, 2016, Bill 119,

Mr. Hoskins / Loi de 2016 sur la protection des renseignements sur la santé, projet de loi 119,

M. Hoskins

Hon. Eric Hoskins.....	9092
Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris.....	9094
Mr. Jeff Yurek	9097
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	9099
Mr. Randy Hillier	9101
Ms. Catherine Fife	9102
Third reading vote deferred	9105

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 4 May 2016 / Mercredi 4 mai 2016

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Time allocation

Hon. Yasir Naqvi	9055
Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	9057
Mr. Gilles Bisson	9058
Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	9060
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	9062
Mr. Randy Hillier.....	9064
Debate deemed adjourned.....	9065

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Robert Bailey	9065
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	9065
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	9065
Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	9065
Mr. Gilles Bisson	9065
Hon. Bill Mauro	9065
Mr. Monte McNaughton	9065
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	9065
Mr. Bob Delaney.....	9066
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	9066
Mme France Gélinas	9066
Hon. Mario Sergio.....	9066
Mr. Ted Arnott	9066
Miss Monique Taylor.....	9066
Hon. Jeff Leal.....	9066
Mr. Jim Wilson	9066
Mme France Gélinas	9066
Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	9066
Ms. Ann Hoggarth.....	9066
Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	9066
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	9066
Hon. Liz Sandals	9066
Ms. Eleanor McMahon.....	9066
Hon. Helena Jaczek.....	9066
Mr. Chris Ballard	9066
Hon. Dipika Damerla	9066
Ms. Soo Wong.....	9066
Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....	9066

Correction of record

Ms. Sylvia Jones	9067
------------------------	------

Visitors

Hon. Mitzie Hunter	9067
--------------------------	------

Fire in Alberta

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	9067
Mr. Patrick Brown.....	9067
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	9067

Visitors

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	9067
-------------------------------------	------

Keith Brown

Mr. John Vanthof.....	9067
Hon. Jeff Leal.....	9068
Ms. Laurie Scott.....	9069
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	9070

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Wind turbines

Mr. Patrick Brown.....	9070
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	9070
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	9070

Wind turbines

Mr. Patrick Brown.....	9071
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	9071
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	9071

Energy policies

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	9072
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	9072
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	9073

Energy policies

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	9073
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	9073

Automotive industry

Mr. Monte McNaughton	9074
Hon. Charles Sousa	9074

Energy policies

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	9075
Hon. David Orazietti	9075

Air quality

Mr. Granville Anderson	9075
Hon. Glen R. Murray.....	9076

Ontario Trillium Foundation

Mr. Steve Clark	9076
Hon. Michael Coteau.....	9076

Hospital funding

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	9077
Hon. Eric Hoskins	9077

Continued on inside back cover

No. 169



N° 169

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 41st Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 41^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 5 May 2016

Jeudi 5 mai 2016



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 416-325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 416-325-3708.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 5 May 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 5 mai 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENERGY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2016 LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS SUR L'ÉNERGIE

Mr. Chiarelli moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning / Projet de loi 135, Loi modifiant plusieurs lois et abrogeant plusieurs règlements en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'énergie et la planification énergétique à long terme.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm pleased to share my time today with my colleague, the hard-working member from Burlington, Eleanor McMahon.

Speaker, today I rise to move third reading of Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015. This proposed legislation would accomplish several very important measures for a stronger, more collaborative energy planning process. It would improve energy transmission reliability in the province of Ontario, and the new planning regimen creates a strong platform to keep electricity rates competitive and for a strong economy.

Before I get into more detail of the proposed legislation, Speaker, I want to recognize the hard work, dedication and commitment of the Ministry of Energy staff and the staff across our energy agencies, including the Independent Electricity System Operator, the Ontario Energy Board and Ontario Power Generation, all of whom have worked tirelessly on this vital piece of legislation and the effort they devote to the energy sector throughout the province every day.

I'd also like to acknowledge energy's role in building Ontario up. Nothing is more essential to our everyday quality of life and economic success than a steady supply of clean, reliable and affordable electricity. Our economy continues to grow, and as technical and operational innovations accelerate, ratepayers, economies, industry and governments need to adapt, and adapt quickly.

I'm talking about electric cars, electrified transit, behind-the-meter generation, smart grid technology, electricity storage, innovations in renewable energy, off-grid generation, modernizing building codes and, most of all, eliminating carbon emissions. This makes our unwavering commitment to innovative, cost-effective, clean and reliable power an ongoing necessity for our economy, our environment and our quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 135 creates a reliable planning mechanism to keep electricity rates competitive and our economy strong and growing. One of the biggest myths we hear—I know it's one often promulgated by members of the opposition—is that electricity prices in Ontario are the highest in North America. This is just plain wrong. Ontario's residential electricity rates are, and will remain, competitive with jurisdictions in North America. When comparing the cost per kilowatt hour, Ontario's rates are lower than most American cities and significantly lower than electricity rates in European cities. While some Canadian provinces have lower prices than Ontario, Ontario has competitive prices with other provinces such as Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Saskatchewan and PEI.

While most other jurisdictions are still burning dirty coal for two thirds of their power, our government is proud that we have achieved competitive rates while undertaking the largest climate change initiative in North America. This requires smart planning legislation and smart planning policies.

Our 2013 long-term energy plan is putting Ontario in a competitive place. The 2013 long-term energy plan is the platform on which we're building the needs of the future through Bill 135.

Looking across Canada, Ontario's recent 2.5% bill increase is reasonable and stacks up competitively across our comparators. BC Hydro rates increased by 4% on April 1, 2016; Saskatchewan power rates were approved for a 5% increase in 2015; Manitoba Hydro applied a rate increase of 3.95% as of April 1, 2016; and Newfoundland Power applied for a rate increase of 3.6% for residential customers as of July 1. Yes, our rates went up by 2.5%; I challenge any member in the Legislature to find a jurisdiction in North America where rates are not going up. The issue is, how do you keep the increases to a minimum? That is a very, very significant issue when it comes to electricity planning.

We also recognize that the price of electricity can be difficult for those who pay a higher share of their income toward the bill, particularly low-income families and seniors on a fixed income. That's why the Ontario Energy Board launched the Ontario Electricity Support Program

for lower-income families, and that is why the debt retirement charge was removed on January 1 of this year, saving the average family a combined \$430 annually.

We also know that bills can be even harder for families and seniors in rural and remote areas that heat with electricity or use medically assistive devices. That's why we doubled the monthly benefit these families can access to up to \$100.

Bill 135, when passed, represents a planning framework that makes these price mitigation measures possible by government.

Through our planning framework, we have additional programs that help reduce bills for Ontario families. The Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit saves qualifying individuals up to \$993 per year; the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program provides emergency financial support; the saveONenergy Home Assistance Program provides free home energy efficiency assessments and energy-saving measures; and the Northern Ontario Energy Credit helps families and individuals in northern Ontario, providing individuals up to \$143 in savings.

Regarding industrial prices, northern Ontario actually has one of the lowest industrial electricity rates in North America—among the lowest in Canada and lower than 49 American states; the third-lowest in North America. Industrial rates in southern Ontario are lower than in Michigan, Wisconsin, New Jersey and California, and below the American average.

Just a few weeks ago, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce partnered with the Ministry of Energy to publish clear data on these facts. It's called the Ontario Energy Report and it's available on the ministry website at www.ontarioenergyreport.ca. I'm going to read that again: www.ontarioenergyreport.ca. Speaker, it's there. There's a chart showing the comparable prices. It's credible, it's objective and it shows that Ontario is doing extremely well compared to our competitors.

Bill 135, if passed, would allow a planning framework to continue and expand existing programs. Just last week, I was in Timmins discussing some of the programs the Ministry of Energy now offers to even further reduce the impact of electricity prices on the bottom line of some of Ontario's industrial consumers. That's the industrial electricity incentive. This is a program our government launched in 2012 to offer sharply discounted rates of up to 50% for job creators across the province, with a special focus on industrial consumers like the mining industry, greenhouse growers, refrigerated warehouses and data-processing centres. Speaker, I want to provide some examples of companies that are benefiting from this IEL program, which provides up to a 50% discount off their electricity bills, a program that could be expanded under the Bill 135 planning process.

0910

I was fortunate to be in Timmins to highlight two local companies, Alamos Gold and St. Andrew Goldfields, which both have made use of this program and expanded their mining operations in that region. We were up there with our staff two or three weeks ago. We had a very

positive reception, particularly from the company involved. Alamos, for example, has increased its daily gold output by 2,000 tonnes per day, creating 75 new jobs and supporting more than 700 good jobs for this community. The CEO of that company credits this program with enabling them to proceed in this way.

These two success stories in the riding of the member from Timmins—James Bay aren't the only companies participating in this program.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What about in Pembroke?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: My critic the member from Pembroke-Renfrew talks about the company in his riding that benefited very significantly and was able to rehire over 100 jobs. I appreciate the fact that my critic gives us credit, once in a while, for doing something good. Thank you.

In fact, the list of IEL program beneficiaries includes FNX Mining Company Inc., in the member from Sudbury's community; Vision Extrusions, in the member from Vaughan's community; Roelands Plant Farms Inc., in the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex's community; Amco Farms Inc., in the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex's community; Omya Canada Inc. and Tweed Inc., in the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington's community; New Gold Inc. and EACOM Timber Corp., in the member from Kenora-Rainy River's community; White River Forest Products, in the member from Algoma-Manitoulin's community; and Resolute FP Canada Inc., in the Thunder Bay community. Just for the record, Speaker, seven of these 10 examples are benefiting companies and communities that are located in opposition members' ridings.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to focus on ensuring that our electricity system is clean, reliable and affordable for all. That can only be accomplished with a modern, updated planning framework, which Bill 135 would provide. And we're continuing to make significant progress in transforming the electricity system into one that Ontarians can continue to count on for reliability, leadership and clean energy.

Speaker, when our government came to office, 25% of Ontario's generation was from very cheap but very dirty coal. A central priority of the government when it comes to energy planning was to ensure a very clean supply mix so that we'd have a healthy population, and a strong planning platform is needed to initiate these types of transformational policies. In that context, Speaker, we have closed all of our coal-fired electricity plants, helping to clean up the air that was making our kids sick and saving the province \$4.4 billion per year in environmental and health care costs. That is the largest emissions reduction action plan in North America, taking the equivalent of seven million cars' worth of emissions off the roads in Ontario, efforts that reduce carbon emissions and fight climate change. It wasn't an easy decision, Speaker, but it was one our government committed to achieve, and, as they say, promise made, promise kept.

But, Speaker, we can't lay down our tools. And one of the best tools we have, moving forward, will be Bill 135.

We've taken energy planning and electricity reliability to a level ignored under previous governments, and we have rebuilt our transmission and distribution systems, investing \$34 billion in the generation and transmission that ensure that when Ontario needs electricity, you can count on it to be there. It's easy to forget that this wasn't always the case, not long ago, and the system was crying out for proper planning frameworks.

I think we can all recall the rolling brownouts and blackouts that made Ontario an unreliable place to do business and set up shop, and that the then-PC government had installed large portable generators in downtown Toronto as a backup for an unreliable and dirty system that had a deficit of electricity. So after years and years of underinvestment, we finally turned the page and ensured that when you flip the switch, the lights will come on.

Speaker, Ontario has also recently confirmed that the future of energy planning in Ontario is strongly rooted in an affordable, reliable, emissions-free supply of baseload nuclear power. This was planned for under the 2013 long-term energy plan, the predecessor to Bill 135. Under that plan, we will continue building for the future, undertaking a very significant nuclear refurbishment plan at the Darlington and Bruce reactors.

What's truly amazing about this commitment is that all nuclear facilities in Ontario are variants of the Candu reactor design, and it's significant that more than 90% of the supply chain that supports this type of nuclear units is located right here in Ontario. That supply chain represents more than 180 companies employing tens of thousands of Ontarians in well-paying jobs.

Refurbishment is also a direct vote of confidence in this supply chain and this domestic industry. It's a vote of confidence in companies like Cambridge's BWXT Canada Ltd., which employs more than 500 people in the community, or Peterborough's General Electric Hitachi nuclear energy facility, which employs more than 350 people in highly skilled trades in the nuclear industry, or perhaps a vote of confidence in Cameco's Port Hope facility, which employs 660 people in the nuclear industry. That energy planning vote of confidence is going to create 60,000 Ontario jobs. It's going to invest \$25 billion in updated and needed energy infrastructure. It's going to drive economic growth in communities across Ontario, and it's going to secure 30 years of emissions-free power. That's amazing as well.

If all that wasn't enough, it's going to help stabilize prices in Ontario. It's going to secure three decades of emissions-free power at a very affordable price of just 7.7 cents per kilowatt hour on average going into the grid.

The planning framework that enabled this success needs a refresh, and that's going to take place in Bill 135. An affordable, clean supply mix is central to our planning. That has recently been reflected in the IESO's first competitive procurement for renewable energy contracts. Last month, the IESO announced that this successful first round would come in at an average price of 8.5 cents per

kilowatt hour, which is comparable to conventional generation, and will include 13 projects, or 80% of the total projects, with significant aboriginal or First Nation participation. And 75% of these 16 projects had local community support, Speaker.

So yes, the world of energy and electricity is changing at an accelerated pace. That's what Bill 135 is all about. What's incredibly significant about our renewable achievements of local support and lower prices is that, compared to the forecasts in our 2013 long-term energy plan, our system now benefits from \$3.3 billion in savings, saving the average consumer \$1.67 per month on their electricity bill, thanks to renewables. This is a significant change in how we procure renewable power in Ontario and sets a strong benchmark for the future of energy planning in this province, one that includes nuclear, renewables, water power and natural gas.

All of these decisions and actions taken by our government to drive cost pressures down, to ensure reliable supply and transmission and to transform our system from one dependent on coal to one free of it relate directly to the legislation we are considering here today.

If passed, this act would establish in law a long-term energy planning process that is transparent, efficient and able to respond to changing policy and system needs, and also, very critically, enable to change a plan and adjust quickly to the accelerated innovation that we're seeing across the energy and electricity sector. This is consistent with our government's commitment to enhance transparency and community participation through open data, open dialogue and open government initiatives.

0920

This act would also support increased competition and enhanced ratepayer value by empowering the Independent Electricity System Operator to competitively procure transmission projects. This is important because previously, there was a regimen that allowed, for example, Hydro One to initiate transmission projects and to implement them. We now have implemented a competitive process where the IESO will open up transmission implementation to all players in these sectors.

This act would also introduce two new initiatives to help Ontario families and businesses conserve energy and water to help manage costs at both the retail customer level and the system as a whole.

First, it would require owners of large buildings to track their buildings' energy and water use and greenhouse gas emissions over time, to allow owners and renters to determine how a building's energy performance is changing and how it compares to similar buildings.

Second, it would set water efficiency standards for products such as appliances that consume both energy and water, like dishwashers and washing machines, allowing Ontarians to make the best choices for themselves when shopping for appliances.

We are not reinventing the wheel here with these two initiatives. Both of these initiatives follow best practices in a significant number of jurisdictions in Canada, the US and the United Kingdom.

This legislation would protect the long-term energy planning principles that developed the 2010 and 2013 long-term energy plans to ensure that future plans are developed consistent with the principles of cost-effectiveness, reliability, clean energy, early community and indigenous people's engagement, with much more attention to innovation, new technologies and climate change.

Our government knows that sound, prudent, long-term energy planning is essential to a clean, reliable and affordable energy system. The best way to ensure that kind of robust system planning occurs is to consult with the public, indigenous communities, industry and the energy stakeholder community. The proposed legislation includes a role for the Ontario Energy Board and the Independent Electricity System Operator in facilitating the implementation of cabinet-approved principles.

In essence, the proposed legislation would give the government the ability to set goals and objectives for the energy sector, but only after consideration of independent technical information on the sector from the IESO and after broad and substantive consultations with the public, stakeholders and aboriginal communities. Once the long-term energy plan has been developed, the IESO and the Ontario Energy Board would be responsible for independently executing and implementing that plan.

The proposed act would ensure that energy planning is conducted in a transparent manner consistent with the government's open dialogue initiative, requiring that the government undertake consultations with the public and relevant stakeholders and consider the results of those consultations when developing the long-term energy plan. This would build on the model of the comprehensive public consultation and engagement already undertaken with consumers, stakeholders and First Nation and Métis communities as part of the 2013 long-term energy planning process.

For the 2013 long-term energy plan, the comprehensive engagement included a number of stakeholder sessions and public town halls which took place in over a dozen communities across the province. More than 1,000 formal submissions were considered, and the ministry received about 8,000 responses to an online survey.

This act would enshrine in legislation the kind of planning process that the ministry used to develop the 2013 long-term energy plan. There is more work to be done, and having an energy planning process that is more open, transparent and responsive to changing times and innovation will help us to continue to build on our achievements.

We are anxious to get moving with this legislation to ensure that open, consultative planning continues to be the watchword of this government. We have heard often from opposition critics that a reliable and affordable electricity system is essential for a strong and competitive economy.

I'd like to conclude this morning by briefly reviewing the strong economic results that energy planning in this province has directly supported.

Ontario's GDP is currently 2.9%. Tied with British Columbia, we are together leading the country. TD Economics has just released its updated forecasts for the country. It projects that Ontario's GDP growth will be 2.9% in 2016, 0.7% higher than we projected in our 2016 budget released just a short while ago.

Ontario has gained 22,500 jobs in the last three months and 85,000 jobs since this time last year, with 90% of those jobs, Speaker, being full-time jobs and 76% being in above-average wage-earning industries.

Our job recovery rate since the great recession is 224%, well outpacing the United States at 161%.

Speaker, we hear the opposition alleging that job losses are resulting from bad energy planning, but the converse is the reality. Good energy policies contribute to a healthy economy and to job creation.

It should not be a surprise that Ontario has been named number one in North American jurisdictions for foreign direct investment for a second year in a row. Investors and companies from around the world are voting for Ontario with their chequebooks. That's the bottom line. Our unemployment rate is 6.8%, well below the national unemployment rate of 7.1%.

Ontario's combined federal and provincial corporate tax rate is the second-lowest of all North American jurisdictions. Together with a reliable, clean, affordable and well-planned electricity sector, Ontario is a magnet to attract investors. So it should come as no surprise that Moody's rating agency has recently upgraded Ontario's rating because of our strong economy, cost containment, and positive deficit reduction results.

Ontario made a choice to continue to invest in people, in infrastructure and in a robust energy sector and to take a little longer to get back to balance. That is why today, Ontario is right up there with British Columbia, leading Canada in economic growth, job creation and exports.

I encourage all members of this House to focus on moving this legislation forward, to securing an open and engaging process for energy planning. Together, we will continue to build Ontario up, to build our local and regional economies and, most importantly, to build a better and carbon-free future for our kids and grandkids.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Burlington.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to begin this morning by thanking the Minister of Energy for his leadership in helping to rebuild and strengthen Ontario's energy system. We are extremely fortunate to have in Ontario a strong mix of reliable sources for our energy needs. This enormously complicated file requires someone steady and wise at the helm, and this minister is definitely both. He is leading Ontario transformation to a clean, green, reliable and affordable future, and for this he deserves our admiration and our thanks as one of the best public servants to hold this portfolio in the history of our province. I thank him for his diligence and his leadership.

Due to his and this government's efforts, Ontario has come so far in building a clean, reliable and diverse

energy system. That is why I am pleased to rise today in support of the third reading of Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016.

Madam Speaker, the current legislative process for energy and electricity planning is burdensome, slow, unresponsive to the changing environment of the energy sector, and unnecessarily costly. That's exactly why our government has proposed a new process which would be able to respond in a timely manner to the emerging policy, program and technology needs that have the potential to make our system stronger and more focused on consumer needs. It would reduce process red tape that can bog down effective planning and reflect a more integrated approach to planning, consultation and implementation. But mostly, Speaker, this is a tried and tested process, one used already in the development of both the 2010 and 2013 long-term energy plans.

Now we have the opportunity to replace the outdated system officially with a planning process that works, both across government and with and among our stakeholders—and it has been embraced, I should note, by them.

0930

The act would bring about improvements in three areas.

First, it would establish in the law a long-term energy planning process that is transparent, efficient and able to respond to changing policy and system needs.

Second, it would support increased competition and enhanced ratepayer value by empowering the Independent Electricity System Operator, or IESO, to competitively procure transmission projects.

Third, it would introduce two new initiatives to help Ontario families, businesses and our province as a whole conserve energy and water to manage costs.

Let's begin with the long-term energy planning process. This government recognizes that sound, prudent long-term energy planning is essential to a clean, reliable and affordable energy future. This goal is being achieved through the implementation of the 2013 long-term energy plan, more commonly known as the LTEP. In fact, the 2013 LTEP was the biggest, most open and comprehensive consultation in ministry history and an early leading example of the principles of open government.

To give you some more background, the 2013 LTEP was designed to balance five principles that guide all of our decisions: cost-effectiveness, reliability, clean energy, community engagement and putting conservation first. For the past two-plus years, we have been rolling out a variety of initiatives under the plan, and it will continue to guide our efforts. The overarching theme throughout the LTEP, and the guiding principle of the plan, is that commitment to putting conservation first.

The 2013 LTEP reinforced this government's commitment to conservation. In fact, it set a long-term conservation target of 30 terawatt hours in 2032. This target represents a 16% reduction in forecast gross demand for electricity, the equivalent of more than all of the power used in 2013 by the city of Toronto alone. The 2013

LTEP also set a goal of meeting 10% of peak demand using demand response by 2025.

Energy efficiency will also help us with another key priority: Meeting the objectives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through this government's Climate Change Action Plan. The Ministry of Energy is making progress in implementing conservation first by launching electricity and natural gas conservation frameworks. Both frameworks are long-term commitments to support the delivery of conservation programs and are aligned to promote collaboration of conservation efforts among electricity and natural gas utilities.

It's important to understand that what is being accomplished on conservation is all driven by the commitments laid out in the LTEP. It is the guiding document and process for the Ministry of Energy, its agencies and the broader energy sector. A high degree of thought and care goes into planning the energy system for the future, including efforts to reduce costs and complexity. Quite simply, this means prioritizing the reliability of our energy supply and making the requisite investment in our energy system. It means thinking beyond the four-year election cycle and planning for the longer term, to ensure that Ontario businesses and residents have the reliability that has become the hallmark of this government's energy policy.

Effective planning also means securing input, and our government is committed to stakeholder and public participation in energy system planning. With this in mind, the province has refined a planning process which is efficient, responsive to changing policy and system needs, and supported by robust stakeholder consultations.

Under the proposed legislation, the IESO technical report is a starting point, a launching pad for stakeholder consultations. Developing the LTEP is a highly collaborative process in which the Ministry of Energy directly engages with stakeholders, indigenous communities and the public. The feedback from consultations and engagements would then be considered in the development of the plan itself. The ministry, with support from its agencies, would then be responsible for preparing the LTEP based on the data provided by the IESO and feedback received through consultations.

The LTEP would include specific goals and objectives for Ontario's energy system and would require cabinet approval before it is issued to the public. Cabinet would also issue directives to the IESO and the Ontario Energy Board asking for implementation plans from both to meet the plan's goals and objectives.

Both the IESO and the Ontario Energy Board would then develop their respective implementation plans outlining frameworks on how best to implement the government's objectives and requirements as set out in the plan.

These implementation plans would be subject to the Minister of Energy's approval. Once the minister has reviewed and approved the implementation plans, the IESO and the OEB would proceed with procurements and developing programs or policies as outlined in their prospective implementation plans.

While this series of checks and balances might seem and feel as though it is very process-oriented, as the saying goes, “Fail to plan, plan to fail.” Getting the plan right is critical.

In support of open government, open dialogue and open data, Bill 135 would require consultation in a variety of forums and mediums when developing LTEPs and would require publication of key background information and data used in their development.

The report would be similar to the technical report that the IESO will be developing on the electricity sector under proposed legislation.

Speaker, as you can see, the built-in consultation in this process is impressive. As I said before, the preparation of the plan, the 2013 LTEP, involved the biggest, most open and comprehensive consultation in Ministry of Energy history, and was an early leading example of following the principles of open government. Opening up the process not only ensures greater input; it also enhances understanding of the enormous complexities that are inherent in the energy system process.

Consultations included 12 regional sessions; round-table discussions with over 600 stakeholders, including evening open houses so the public could participate, and, excitingly, 300 members of the public did so; and 10 indigenous engagement sessions, meetings with a total of about 275 participants from over 100 First Nations and Métis communities and organizations.

An academic-focused innovation session, in development with the Mowat Centre, was held to discuss best leading-edge practices in conservation, community energy planning, emerging technologies and ensuring grid resiliency.

The Ministry of Energy also heard from individuals, municipalities, industry associations, businesses, non-government organizations, First Nations and Métis communities and other groups.

The ministry received more than 1,200 EBR submissions, 2,000 emails through letter-writing campaigns and close to 8,000 questionnaire responses. All of this has shaped our plan moving forward, Madam Speaker.

The Ministry of Energy went to these communities, and senior officials met face to face with thousands of people. This is meaningful consultation, not conducted in some closed-door boardroom. The LTEP consultation process is a very public one.

One initiative that has resulted from the LTEP planning process is the Ontario Energy Report and website. This quarterly report brings together approximately 60 datasets from across Ontario’s energy sector and makes them available to everyone—an excellent example of transparency and open government in action.

Over the 2010 and 2013 LTEP rounds, the LTEP planning process has proven itself an effective means of establishing the government’s key goals and priorities for our province’s energy system. Again, the effectiveness of this planning process is yet another reason why the government is proposing a statutory basis for long-term-energy planning that would build on the 2010 and 2013

processes. This plan would make consultation with the public, stakeholders, First Nations and Métis groups throughout Ontario a requirement in the development of energy plans moving forward, as well as ensuring that energy plans and their supporting technical data are made public.

There has been a lot of support for Ontario’s leadership in energy planning and setting a standard for openness and transparency in the process. Many positive comments were shared by stakeholders during public committee hearings for this bill. I can tell you that in my own riding of Burlington, where a good cross-section of the nuclear energy supply chain is resident, there is broad support for the minister’s leadership, the hard work of his officials and the steady hand that is guiding the helm of the long-term energy planning process.

Indeed, Chris Hughes, the CEO of Laker Energy, a company in my riding and a supplier engaged in the Bruce nuclear refurbishments, has said publicly that this is the best energy minister he has worked with in the history of his career.

0940

He is not alone in his praise of the important work that our government and this ministry is doing. For example, Deputy Grand Chief Derek Fox of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation said:

“Bill 135 is a clear recognition that energy has far-reaching political, economic, social and environmental impacts—all of which are critical to NAN and the 49 First Nations it represents.

“Bill 135 clearly establishes the requirement to consult with First Nations” of NAN, and, in acknowledging that First Nations must be consulted, that we “must be an active participant and beneficiary of Ontario’s energy industry.”

Also, David McFadden, chair of the Ontario Energy Association, said:

“I’ll outline a few of the reasons why we think Bill 135 is important.

“First, and perhaps most importantly, it provides clarification on how energy planning will proceed in the future in this province. Predictability is very important for the energy sector, as you well know, because energy projects are often capital-intensive and require long lead times for development and construction....

“Energy infrastructure is vital to our province’s economic prosperity and to our standard of living. Proper planning is essential. By spelling out when and how energy planning will be done, Bill 135 greatly improves the ability of energy companies to do business in Ontario and provides Ontario’s citizens and businesses with reliable and sustainable energy supplies.”

He continued: “Bill 135 also makes some specific positive changes to the role of the Independent Electricity System Operator. In particular, Bill 135 adds electricity storage and transmission projects to the IESO’s procurement authorities. The proposed IESO procurement mechanisms will improve the integration of renewable power into Ontario’s energy system while encouraging new,

competitive entry into Ontario's storage and transmission businesses.

"If any of you participated in the 2013 LTEP," he continued, "then much of this will sound familiar, and that's because the government did an unprecedented job in developing the plan, consulting with our industry and the public, and working closely with the IESO to get the facts right."

The second change proposed in this bill is a change to transmission planning and procurement. Electricity transmission system planning is the responsibility of the IESO and involves assessing need and timing for new transmission infrastructure. Key bulk system transmission projects may be identified in the proposed LTEP process that I just described. Currently, the IESO can procure generation assets and electricity capacity, but it does not have the authority to undertake procurement for transmission. The legislation would provide the IESO with this ability, and it will allow for it to undertake competitive processes for transmitter selection or procurement, where appropriate.

A shift to a competitive procurement approach to transmission reflects the increasing role of the private sector in the transmission system with all of the inherent efficiencies this brings, and will ensure ratepayers receive the best value when investments are made to upgrade the system. And those need to be made, make no mistake. To suggest otherwise is to imperil our system and it would mean a return to the brownouts that were a hallmark of our past.

The IESO is well positioned to undertake the selection or procurement processes. If passed, Bill 135 would empower the Independent Electricity System Operator to undertake competitive selection or procurement of transmission where appropriate, leading to enhanced affordability.

The third change under Bill 135 relates to energy conservation. Conservation is one of the five pillars of Ontario's long-term energy plan, along with cost-effectiveness, reliability, clean energy and community engagement. Conservation is the cleanest and most cost-effective energy resource. It helps families and businesses save money on their energy bills and reduces the need to build expensive energy infrastructure. Conservation also reduces greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution, creating a cleaner future for our children and grandchildren. It builds on our investments in the system, which saw us transition from dirty coal to a cleaner energy future, the single most transformative clean energy decision in North America. Fewer smog days and hospital admissions have been the powerful legacy of that investment, and as an asthmatic, I'm grateful for both of those.

As the government plans our energy needs for the next 20 years, conservation will be the first resource considered before building new generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure, wherever cost-effective. When you consider the potential for large-scale electrification, making the most of our existing resources and achieving maximum efficiency becomes doubly important.

Ontario has already made great strides in building a culture of conservation. From 2005 to 2014, Ontarians conserved 9.9 terawatts of electricity, enough to power the cities of Ottawa and Windsor in 2014. As mentioned earlier, the electricity conservation target is 30 terawatt hours by 2032. We are also aiming to use demand response to meet 10% of peak demand by 2025.

Bill 135 introduces two new initiatives that would help Ontario families, businesses and our province as a whole conserve water and energy and manage costs. The first of these mechanisms is the energy and water reporting and benchmarking initiative for large buildings. If this legislation is passed, the energy and water reporting and benchmarking initiative for large buildings would help building owners identify opportunities to save energy and water, thereby saving money on their utility bills. It would also help tenants and buyers make informed property decisions, enabling property and financial markets to value energy- and water-efficient buildings. It would help Ontario, too, to meet its conservation and greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Buildings accounted for 19% of Ontario's total greenhouse gas emissions in 2013. This means that large building owners can play an important role in helping Ontario meet its conservation and greenhouse gas reduction objectives. The new legislation would enable a requirement for property owners of large buildings that are 50,000 square feet and above to track their building's energy and water use, as well as greenhouse gas emissions, over time to determine how a building's energy performance is changing over time and how it compares to similar buildings, giving businesses the tools they need to remain competitive and save money, too.

Ontario is already demonstrating leadership through energy reporting and benchmarking requirements for government and broader public sector buildings. Extending this requirement to large commercial buildings would align our policy with jurisdictions across the United States, Europe, the United Kingdom and Asia, which is all very critical and important in the global economy that we operate in.

The second one is setting water efficiency standards for energy-using products. Ontario already has the most stringent efficiency requirements in Canada for a number of products. The Ministry of Energy has been regulating the energy efficiency of products and appliances for more than 25 years. Bill 135 proposes to add the water efficiency standards for energy-consuming products initiatives. To maintain Ontario's leadership role in regulating energy efficiency and to fully harmonize efficiency requirements, as I mentioned earlier, with leading North American jurisdictions, the Ministry of Energy is proposing to regulate the water efficiency of products and appliances that consume both water and energy, such as dishwashers and washing machines. Products that meet both energy and water efficiency requirements use less energy.

Currently, manufacturers can supply the Ontario market with models that meet our energy efficiency require-

ments but consume more energy than they would if we also included water efficiency standards. Other jurisdictions, including the province of British Columbia and the US Department of Energy, regulate both energy and water efficiency standards for these products. By harmonizing with the US standards for these products, Ontario can streamline the process for manufacturers, save consumers money and show continued leadership in setting efficiency standards.

Adding water efficiency standards to the existing energy efficiency regulation would streamline requirements for manufacturers and increase opportunities for consumers to choose a more efficient product. We are, Speaker, empowering consumers with this initiative.

During the committee public hearings for this bill, we heard positive reactions from several stakeholders, including from the Building Owners and Managers Association, the Toronto Atmospheric Fund, the Real Property Association of Canada and companies working in the energy efficiency sector. Brian Purcell, director of policy and programs at the Toronto Atmospheric Fund, said, "We really encourage the province to move forward with that type of policy, and we're encouraged to see it as part of the package of legislative updates to the Green Energy Act that are part of Bill 135."

Bala Gnanam, director of sustainability and building technologies with the Building Owners and Managers Association, said, "As a major stakeholder in the province's commercial real estate industry, we are fully supportive of any initiative aimed at promoting building performance and environmental stewardship. We also welcome the minister's customer-centric approach to the province's long-term energy plan."

0950

Brooks Barnett, manager of government relations, said: "We view this bill in its entirety as a major enabler of enhanced energy management and improved communication of key industry trends. The overarching theme throughout Ontario's long-term energy plan is the commitment to put conservation first. We believe that these proposals are indicative of the government's commitment to energy conservation in Ontario.

"In this, Ontario has a chance to lead by example."

To sum up, Madam Speaker, the planning of the 2013 long-term energy plan was based on both a wide range of datasets and the most comprehensive consultation in Ministry of Energy history. By enshrining this planning process in legislation, this will ensure that we have the best information and planning for Ontario's energy future and that the process is transparent and the data is made available to inform the public and the process.

The ministry and government have worked so hard to finally be here in the Legislature and are so close to solidifying the act. If passed, Bill 135 means an open, transparent and highly collaborative future, with energy planning that is conducted in a manner consistent with the government's open-dialogue initiative. It would continue to build on the comprehensive public consultation and engagement already undertaken with consumers,

stakeholders and aboriginal communities as part of the 2013 long-term energy planning process, more commonly known, of course, as LTEP.

In conservation, if passed, the new legislation would give Ontarians the information we need to make smart energy decisions about the products we use and the places we live and work. As more Ontarians want to conserve energy, we are empowering them to do so, which is a really important next step. The new knowledge would help people manage their energy bills, help businesses remain competitive and create jobs, and help our province reach its conservation and greenhouse gas emission goals as well.

From conservation first to helping consumers, businesses and industries save money and nuclear refurbishment, the Ministry of Energy is at the forefront of projects that matter to people. The top priority will always be ensuring that Ontario's electricity needs are met in a sustainable manner. Developing renewable energy sources and fostering a culture of conservation are cornerstones of Ontario's balanced plan to provide clean and reliable energy while encouraging the development of a clean energy economy for our future. Our efforts today will have benefits lasting for many years and many generations to come.

Speaker, I look forward to seeing how this act, if accepted, will make that future happen, and I encourage all members of this House to support this cleaner, carbon-free future.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments? I recognize the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, you caught me a little by surprise. I didn't think they were going to end quite so early. But I was up all night preparing remarks anyway to respond to the Minister of Energy and the member from Burlington.

I only have a couple of minutes here, but I'm just going to start by saying—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I need to remind the member that we address each other by the riding or "the minister." I just want to be very clear. You know the rules.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I didn't call anyone by name. I said "the member from Burlington."

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): No, you addressed the minister by his first name. Let's remember that the rules of the House are that you address each other by riding or the minister's title.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker.

I get now the Liberals' new austerity program. They brought back Bill 135. I got it from the table, and it says, "First reading October 28, 2015." Do you know why there was no reason to bring back one that said "second reading"? Because, Speaker, the bill came back in exactly the same form that it came here in first reading. How perfect have the Liberals gotten? They brought forth a bill in October of 2015 and took it to committee. We heard from stakeholders from all across the province

from every sector, from the energy sector, from the environment, Greenpeace and everybody else who wanted to see significant amendments to this bill. Thirty-four amendments were proposed to this bill, many by the third party, the NDP—I'm pleased to see the critic for the third party; I can't say his name, but he's the member for Danforth—and myself. We proposed many amendments. Not one was accepted.

I hope I get a chance to speak to this again, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity, and I appreciate the recognition by the energy critic for the opposition.

This is a bill that will be condemned for years to come. This is a bill that will be condemned in the same way that the fire sale of Hydro One has been and will be condemned. This is a bill that will be condemned in future inquiries into energy scandals in this province without a doubt. They'll say, "Where did all this come from?" Trace it back to the roots. The roots were in this bill, which set up the Minister of Energy, no matter who that person, as the energy czar for Ontario.

This bill substantially reduces the accountability of the minister and the Ministry of Energy. This bill locks out the public. This bill makes sure that the ability of those who are critical of an electricity plan are not able to actually put decision-makers and researchers on a witness stand and cross-examine them under oath to determine the validity of any particular evidence that's put forward.

I expected a variety of defences from this government on this bill. The one I had not expected, the one I didn't prepare for, was the argument that this bill is simply a codification of the practices that have led to so many successes with the energy policy of this government in this province. That, I had never expected. There was not a word from the member from Burlington or the Minister of Energy about the \$1.5 billion in surplus power that we have to dump on electricity markets outside Ontario every year—\$1.5 billion, and we get back pennies on the dollar. It's a burden on electricity payers, families, businesses across this province, and that's not even to mention smart meters or the gas plant scandal. This bill is a disaster.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'm pleased to stand today and make some responses in support of Bill 135. I would like to focus on a couple of comments that have been brought forward by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and the member from Toronto–Danforth.

I'm not seeing this bill as has been described by the opposition. I don't see this as a new austerity program. I feel compelled that we need to point out and continue to reiterate that we have been leaders in our approach to energy: not only in Canada but in North America. The first jurisdiction to eliminate coal-fired plants is something to be proud of—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Can we stop the clock? I'm going to remind the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm having a conversation.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): No, no. There's no cross-talk. It's very disrespectful. There is a member speaking right now. I just want to remind the member: The next time I stand up, it will be a warning. And you remember that today there are some votes. Okay?

I'm going to return to the member from Kingston and the Islands.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and well done.

If we're going to talk about our energy minister as the energy czar, I think that it's incredibly important we acknowledge the work that has been done. The simple fact of removing coal-fired energy plants from our province has meant that we have had zero smog days—zero.

My brother—my family—has been profoundly affected by this. He has very serious asthma, and he's only one of many, many people in the province who are benefiting from this change. We need to acknowledge that. We need to recognize that we have been leaders in North America in making this change, and that is something to be proud of.

1000

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments on Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning, and comment on the speech from the Minister of Energy and others.

I thought I was living in another province when I was listening to the Minister of Energy's speech, because he was talking about how affordable electricity prices are and all of the wonderful things that the government is doing to make electricity more affordable. He was talking about kilowatt hours and how competitive our prices are for individuals and industry compared to other provinces and states. I have to say that certainly my experience in opening my hydro bill each month does not relate in any way to the minister's speech. It's just another world.

I'll give an example: Last Friday, I attended the Parry Sound Municipal Association meeting, a meeting I try to get to every year. I walked in and saw some seniors gathering. They were actually preparing the lunch for the municipal meeting. I walked in to say hi to them, and what's first thing they said to me? They said, "What's going on with electricity prices?" That was the first thing they said. Most people open their electricity bill with trepidation because they just wonder how expensive it's going to be each month. That is the reality, certainly in rural Ontario.

I think what this government needs to do is focus on affordability of electricity and get away from their crazy policies so people can afford to live in this province. Last

week in private members' business we were talking about building wind turbines two nautical miles away from Collingwood airport and Stayner airport. That is insane. That is what this government's policy is allowing. As a pilot, that's crazy, and that demonstrates a lot of your energy policies in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to return to the member from Burlington.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Not surprisingly, Speaker, there's a number of points of view on this legislation but I have to tell you, as I said in my remarks earlier this morning, I couldn't be prouder of the long-term planning that our government is investing in to provide a predictable future for Ontarians and to provide businesses and organizations in this province with the kind of processes they need to invest in technology. We're looking at long-term energy savings and conservation, which, quite frankly, doesn't get a lot of airtime because it's not, I suppose, a terribly sexy word. Nonetheless, it's incredibly important.

This legislation will enable a conservation planning framework and imbed it. It was also imbedded—I'm surprised this didn't get commented on by the opposition because they like to talk about open government, as do we. As a hallmark of the open government process, this will imbed consultation in the long-term energy processes—significant consultation with stakeholders from the energy sector, consumers, ratepayers, businesses of all sizes and our First Nations people.

You heard me quote in my remarks the head of NAN, the grand chief, talk about the importance of engaging our First Nations peoples, our indigenous peoples, in this important conversation, and of recognizing implicitly that they need to and should benefit from our long-term energy planning.

All in all, I hope that when it comes to a vote on this important legislation, the opposition gives ear to the importance of creating for our government the long-term energy planning processes that are inherent in making good decisions, whether it comes to conservation, saving Ontarians money or ensuring that we have fewer smog days and a cleaner and greener energy future.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm going to clarify the comments to the member from Kingston and the Islands. I didn't imply that there was an austerity program in this bill. What it amounts to is the austerity program of this government in just bringing back bills unamended, which means they don't even have to print them again to bring them back to the House. That's about as much as they've done to save money in this province: ignoring what has been said to them at committee by many, many stakeholders through a broad section of this province. It's just people who are involved in the energy business, such as the Ontario Energy Association, which proposed some very, very noteworthy and well-considered amendments to this bill. But environmental groups such as Greenpeace were also very concerned about the concentration of power in the minister's office.

In this province, does anybody remember the gas plant scandal? Oh, excuse me. Nobody's ever going to forget it, because it cost you over \$1 billion. Even though the Liberals got up and said it was going to be a \$40-million mess, it turned out to be 25 times that—an over-\$1-billion scandal, one of the greatest scandals in this province's history.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: And the member for Davenport—we never heckled the minister once during their speeches, but now, Speaker, you're allowing that kind of stuff to go on. Get control of this place, please.

She wants to go on that the opposition parties would have cancelled the gas plants too. The opposition parties wouldn't have built them there in the first place. That's the problem. You didn't listen to the people when you decided to build them there, and when the pressure got too hot, when the heat got too hot for you people—you were afraid of losing seats in the 2011 election—you decided to cancel—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay, I'm hearing lots of shouting and making statements. Can we stop the clock? I want to remind the members that the member from Renfrew has the floor, okay? So let's be respectful in this debate. I know there will be colourful language. I'm going to return back to the member. If I hear any more shouting and innuendo, you will be warned.

The member from Renfrew.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's wonderful to be able to get up here and, hopefully, be able to get through my remarks without being disturbed by the heckles from the other side.

The minister then ignored the views of the people, went ahead and decided where those plants were going to go. Then when the heat got too much, the Premier at the time, Dalton McGuinty, decided to cancel the gas plants.

It seemed like, "Oh, it's \$40 million. It's not the end of the world." But they weren't being honest when they said it was \$40 million, and an investigation proved that. The auditor proved that—\$1.1 billion.

So let's see what it turned out to be. They cancel a gas plant in Oakville. Now they've had to—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to remind the member we're debating Bill 135. Stick to Bill 135.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It is about Bill 135, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): No—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's about the minister's power under Bill 135.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): You are going to stick to Bill 135 in your comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I listened to the minister for an hour, and he barely talked about Bill 135. He talked about energy rates.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I just need to remind the member: You are going to debate, in your comments, Bill 135.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Speaker: I listened to the minister—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay. You're going to ask for a point of order?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, I am. I would expect that the treatment for the members on the opposite side would be the same as the government side. The minister spoke about all kinds of different energy programs that had nothing to do with Bill 135. We never interrupted, and he was allowed to do so.

Mr. Tim Hudak: On the same point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member for Niagara West.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It seems to me that in Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, the whole thing has to deal with how the Minister of Energy is going to treat issues and establish a level of trust in the new powers of the minister—whether the minister will use them appropriately. I do think the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke respectfully has a very fair point here in terms of why the opposition is not supporting this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I just want to remind the member to stay as close to the bill as possible.
1010

Mr. John Yakabuski: I am doing that, Speaker, very closely, because this is about the power of the minister. But in order to establish why we are so opposed to this bill, we have to talk a little bit about the history of the Ministry of Energy and what they did to this province, costing us \$1 billion—shameful.

Let's go back to that. The minister then cancelled the plants. Now we've got a situation where we're building transmission lines from Sarnia down to Oakville, from Lennox down to Mississauga. Why? Because they decided they were going to cancel it for political reasons. As the Premier said herself, admitted herself, it was a political decision—a political decision. Political decisions aren't made by what used to be the OPA or the IESO. Political decisions are made by the politicians. That was a political decision that cost this province and its energy ratepayers over \$1 billion.

That was when the minister didn't have Bill 135 in his or her pocket, whoever the minister will be today, tomorrow and into the future. That was without Bill 135. Now this government, through the power of its majority, where it ran roughshod over us at committee, has decided that they don't want to retain the powers the minister had; they want to increase those powers so that the minister can actually ignore the best advice of the professionals at the IESO and the Ontario Energy Board. They can just take the OEB and the IESO, fold them into a little ball and toss them in the garbage, because they don't need to talk to them anymore. The minister is the supreme being. The minister will make the decisions.

They talk about consultation? That is a sham. We looked at that in the bill. Oh, yes, they're going to travel all over the province, just like they do on everything else. What about those pre-budget hearings that amounted to nothing? The minister had already written the budget,

and they were still out, going around the province: "Oh, what do you think we should do in the budget?" What a joke that was. So what do you think we're going to get on a consultation process throughout this province if Bill 135 passes?

You know what? I love the way they line up their supporters and get their quotes. When they're answering questions in the House, they'll have some group that will say, "Oh, this is the best thing since the invention of the wheel." And then they say, "See, everybody loves us." They even talk about that when it comes to hydro rates. They say, "Oh, look at Joe from wherever, Kalamazoo"—it might as well be Kalamazoo—"says that his hydro bill has gone down." So the Minister of Finance gets up in the House, saying, "Hydro rates are going down in the province of Ontario."

Now we're going to have Bill 135, where we don't just crown the minister; we make him the emperor of energy. Not the energy czar; that's not high enough. I hate to disagree with my friend from Toronto–Danforth, but "energy czar" is not a strong enough title. He's going to be the emperor of energy. He will just be able to ignore the sound advice of the professionals.

We had the Society of Energy Professionals—the professionals who run the plants, the professionals who run the system. It's highly unusual for them to come to a committee hearing and disagree with a minister of the crown, but they came to the hearings and said, "Don't proceed with this bill unamended. We cannot have that kind of power put into the hands of one person." Ignored.

I've got to say to my colleague from Toronto–Danforth, I was shocked, and I believe he was as well. I can't speak for him, but he is the member from Toronto–Danforth, and he is the energy critic for the third party. I believe he was as shocked as I was that none of our amendments were accepted by the government. They ask us: "Are you going to vote for this?" Are they crazy? We didn't vote for it the last time. They didn't make any changes. We won't be—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay, seeing it is 10:15, we'll recess until 10:30.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased this morning to introduce three members from the Whitby–Oshawa riding: Michelle Makris, Sandra Kim Ferri and Diane Morton, who are in the gallery right here. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm pleased to introduce this morning, in our lobby, the new northern development and mining representative, Marc Di Rosa. Good to have you with us, Marc.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to introduce Eli Preston and Danielle Preston, who are here at Queen's Park for the first time, visiting from the United States. Today is Eli's birthday. Please welcome them.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm delighted today to invite all members to the Tibetan lunch—it's Tibet Day—on behalf of the Ontario Parliamentary Friends of Tibet. We also have, in the gallery, Mr. Phunstok Chomphel, Ms. Kalsang Dolker Gyaltzen, Miss Chime Lhamo, and the president of the organizations, Mr. Sonam Lankar. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like to introduce a few people: first, Sarah Cannon, who's the executive director of Parents for Children's Mental Health—it is Children's Mental Health Week—as well as Kim Moran, the CEO of Children's Mental Health Ontario. I think Angela Fowler is here with her as well. She's the director of strategic initiatives at Children's Mental Health.

I want to acknowledge some parents I met, parents of children with autism, whom I talked to briefly before question period. Thank you for being here.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: In the members' gallery, I would like to welcome Fire Chief Chuck Parsons and his wife, Wendy, as well as Deputy Fire Chief Mike Bradt and his wife, Sandy. They are from the Leamington fire department in the great riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex. Welcome.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome a number of parents from Waterloo region who are here today to bring attention to the government's cuts to autism services: Sarah Jones, Laurie Shiffer, Amy Fee, Kathie Shaw, Laura Pastrok, Niveen Shrem, Kohar Kilejian, Kanika Kahmida, Tina Mach-Stevenson, Elizabeth Everest-Rendall, Jill Bernhard and Dana Pettis. Thank you for coming to Queen's Park today.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'd like to introduce Gillian Rowatt, a fantastic member of my staff in my constit office. Welcome to Queen's Park, Gillian.

Mrs. Julia Munro: We are joined today by Ross and Korine Maclean, from my riding of York-Simcoe, who are here today in support of their daughter, Serenity, who has autism.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'd like to welcome some guests today—families with autism. We have Nancy Marchese, Shiri Bartman, Tracie Linblad, Sharon Gabison, Laura and Bruce McIntosh, Kara Onofrio, Nancy Warren, Kristen Ellison, Diana Rojas, Kim Kirkos, Dax Giguere, Jill and Adriana Breugem, Penny Batey, Cliff McIntosh and Christina Charalambous. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to welcome Warren "Smokey" Thomas. The president of OPSEU is in the crowd this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park yet again, sir.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome Sue Jamjekian, her husband, Garo, and her two sons, Manny and Gabriel, who are visiting from the Quinte region today as part of the autism protest.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm very pleased today to welcome a school from my riding. G.L. Roberts collegiate is here. And the grade 10 civics classes? I taught them in grade 8, so welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Please join me in welcoming Penny Batey, Cliff McIntosh, Clara McIntosh and Heather Wood, who are joining the autism rally later on today.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm really pleased to welcome our page captain, Laura Persichini. Her mother is here with us today in gallery: Mary Persichini. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Seated in the gallery this morning, I'd like to welcome the press gallery summer intern, Sindi Skenderi, in the Speaker's gallery. Sindi, welcome. She'll be working with the Queen's Park press gallery until September. A pleasure. Thank you for joining us.

Also in the Speaker's gallery is not only a personal friend but the Speaker of Manitoba, here in the Speaker's gallery with his wife. Their names are Daryl and Sheila Reid. Welcome, Mr. Speaker. I might add in terms of his service to his province that he is retiring. I want to thank him and wish him well in his future endeavours. Congratulations, Mr. Speaker.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members will be aware that there appear on today's Orders and Notices paper two notices of opposition days to be debated next week. Under standing order 43(c), the Speaker is required to select one of those notices for consideration. I would like to advise the members that the motion by Ms. Horwath is the one that will be selected for debate next week.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order: the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm just wondering if there's been an optional statutory holiday declared for cabinet ministers.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. The member will know that that's not appropriate. He does know that, which also makes it a little less tolerant of my patience.

DEATH OF MEMBER'S SON

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe-Grey on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's with sadness that I regret to inform the House that two evenings ago, Toby Barrett's son Brett died peacefully at home, surrounded by his family, after a three-month battle with cancer. Brett was just 31 years old. I know I speak on behalf of all members that our prayers and thoughts are with Toby and his family at this very difficult time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for his point of order and would echo his comments in that I know that all of us, when family is involved—in this circumstance, a friend of mine, as Toby is—I offer him my personal sadness.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. I've told the Legislature the story of seven-year-old Joshua and his family from Oakville. You've heard about seven-year-old Warren from the Peterborough area. But you've taken no action to help them. The stories are countless. There is four-year-old Lila from Etobicoke, seven-year-old Wesley from Grimsby and four-year-old Adam from Mississauga. There's five-year-old Keith from Toronto and four-year-old Mason from Oshawa. This government has turned their back on all these young children.

IBI is effective after the age of five. Autism does not end at five. Why can't these children receive the IBI treatment they were promised? Why can't they receive the IBI treatment they deserve?

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to reinforce that our thoughts are with Toby Barrett in this very sad moment.

The plan that we are putting in place, the \$333 million that will change the program in the province, is designed exactly to provide the kind of intense service for all of the children that the Leader of the Opposition has named. Right now, we have a situation where children are on a waiting list. They are not getting service. That is unacceptable to us. What we are doing is investing in those children, in those families, to make sure that they come off a waiting list into service, and that that service is tailored, that program is designed for those children, and they get exactly the level of intensity that they need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Dufferin—Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Back to the Premier: A family in my riding is considering leaving the province to get the support their daughter needs. In their letter, they write:

"There are many people discussing moving province or country and we have the option for both. We own a manufacturing business. We operate here and we can move it if need be. We would have to leave our friends and family and our amazing school supports here in Dufferin.... Should we move now to save her?" These parents only want the best for their children and will do anything for them.

Premier, it's never too late to do the right thing. Will you reverse your decision and restore IBI therapy to children over five?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I thank the member for the important question, and again, I want to acknowledge the families that are here today.

I think we're in agreement, I would say to the critic from the opposition, that we want the best for these children. We want these children to reach their full potential. That is something I hear from parents all the time. I'm

meeting with parents on a continuous basis. Many of them have told us what this new program should look like. That feedback has been incorporated, but there are additional opportunities to hear parents' voices, and to hear children's voices, too, as this program transitions over the next couple of years.

I've met with the Ontario Autism Coalition and the alliance of parents for children with autism. They're giving us great feedback about how this program should move forward. I look forward to that continued dialogue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary. The member for Prince Edward—Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is back to the Premier. Premier, I want to tell you about Sue Jamjekian and her son Gabriel, who is six, who join us here in the Legislature today. Gabriel is on the autism spectrum. When he was younger, he was almost totally non-verbal. He had no vocabulary. He now speaks in full sentences, takes direction, and his outbursts are fewer and far between because he doesn't feel like he can't communicate.

Gabriel's brother Manny is also on the autism spectrum. Manny turns five later this year. Gabriel, in his mother Sue's words, is living proof that IBI at any age can change lives.

My question to the Premier is simple: Why is she abandoning kids like Gabriel and Manny? Why does she insist that autism ends at age five?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's important for me to say again in the House, especially with parents here today, that I do not believe that autism ends at age five. Our government doesn't believe that; I don't think anybody believes that.

The new program represents 16,000 additional spaces to be added, and wait-lists will be cut. The intent of the program is to ensure that children get the individual support they need, with the right intensity for the right duration.

It's important to note that children are not being removed immediately from treatment. There is a transition—and I acknowledge that transition can be challenging; absolutely. That's why it's important that I keep hearing from parents, I keep hearing from the experts and I keep hearing from the medical community and others to make sure, as we move through this process, that all voices are heard and we get this right.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mrs. Gila Martow: Again to the Premier: Two weeks ago, I reminded the Premier of her recent interaction with a teenager from my riding of Thornhill. The teenager spoke eloquently to the Premier at the end of an autism rally outside her constituency office. That teenager was Cliff McIntosh, who received IBI therapy after the age of five.

Does the Premier agree that IBI therapy is helpful after the age of five?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I did speak with Cliff, and I acknowledge the families who are here.

Last week, I spoke with families with children with autism every day, and I understand, absolutely, that we need to make sure that young people get the intensity of therapy, the intensity of service that they need. That is exactly why we need to do what we're doing. Right now, those kids are not getting service. Some of them are not getting service at all, and those who are getting service are not getting the level of intensity that they need. That's why we are investing in this program. That's why this transition is important: so that young people, whatever their age, can get the therapy and service that they need that's tailored to their needs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary. The member from Niagara West—Glanbrook.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, this weekend you'll celebrate Mother's Day, but little Enzo's mom, Shawna, has never heard her own son say "I love you" and never heard even the single word "Mom." Five-year-old Enzo lives in Grimsby. He was diagnosed with autism, and he has been waiting for life-saving IBI therapy for two years. Enzo doesn't speak. He is aggressive. He has poor motor skills. And he's in fragile health because, as a result of his autism, he has a fear of most foods. All of this is treatable, but without IBI, Enzo's mom, Shawna, fears that it's too late for her son. It's a very treatable condition, but he'll be stuck there, potentially, for the rest of his life.

Premier, please don't deny Enzo's mom, Shawna, an opportunity to hear those four precious words: "I love you, Mom."

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, this is exactly why we are making this change: because we don't want Enzo to continue to wait for service while the biological window closes, where that intensity of service can be of the most use.

Part of the \$333 million is being invested in early identification, because early identification, which we have heard from parents—quite frankly, I have heard from parents for years, from the time I was the Minister of Education, that we need more early intervention, and we need that to be more universal across the province. That early intervention, accompanied by tailored services that are the right intensity for the child, whether that child is age four or whether that child is age 11—that they get the intensity of service that they need. That's exactly what this program is designed to provide, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final—
Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Second time for the member from Hamilton Mountain.

The member from Wellington—Halton Hills on the final supplementary.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Back to the Premier: The government's answers to our questions on IBI funding seem to display a callousness in contradiction to a government which claims to care.

I have heard from Meghan Graham, who grew up in Elora and, years ago, was actually a legislative page here. Her son Daniel is autistic. Daniel needed, received and

benefited from IBI therapy from the ages of seven to nine, and he has made great strides. Daniel's mom has passionately made the case to me that all autistic children need to be able to access IBI therapy.

We need the Premier to stand up in this House, acknowledge that autism doesn't end at age five, and say, "We're going to find a way to eliminate these wait-lists and help all autistic children, including those older than five, to reach their full potential," and then work hard to bring truth to that statement. Why won't she do that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Again, thanks to the opposition for the important question.

It's important to clarify that children who are currently receiving IBI are not being immediately removed from service. They will receive their clinical assessment at the regular six-month interval, Speaker, and a transition plan will be identified that's specific to their needs. So if they continue to need those kinds of intensive services, they will get intensive services. It will be more tailored and more customized for the right duration to meet that child's needs.

1050

I encourage the opposition to reach out to my office. I've shared information with the opposition on the facts of the new program. I do welcome opposition feedback; I appreciate the letters. I've talked to a number of them. It's important that we all have our facts straight. I worry a bit, Speaker, if the facts are not clear, so I'm very committed to helping the opposition get clarity on that.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Hundreds of parents are coming to Queen's Park today to fight for the autism services that their kids need. Many of these parents have already been to Queen's Park to rally on the lawn or to tell their stories in press conferences. Their children are being cut off from the waiting list. Schools are not ready for this change and neither are service providers. This is a recipe for chaos. Implementation of this program, this plan, has already gone off the rails.

There is no need to rush through bad policy. Will the Premier listen to these parents and cancel her plan to cut off IBI services for children over the age of five?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to just say to the leader of the third party that I completely agree with her that the implementation and the transition, for parents, is extremely important in this. I'm glad that she is focusing on that because it is extremely important that families know what the transition is. I will say, Mr. Speaker, that a number of the parents that I spoke to last week were saying that to me: that they weren't getting enough information. The minister is working on making sure that families get the information about when the assessment will take place and what the transition plan will be.

But we are not willing to leave children sitting on a waiting list not getting service when we know full well that getting service to those children earlier is what will help them in their immediate lives and in the long term. That's what this plan is about. But I agree with the leader of the third party that making sure that those transition plans are in place and that families know what is happening is paramount.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I find that very interesting, Speaker. Earlier this year, this Premier admitted that she made a mistake when she planned to nearly double the cost of prescriptions for Ontario seniors. It was the wrong decision. Today, there are hundreds of Ontario parents who are telling this government that cancelling IBI autism therapy for kids over five is wrong.

It is not just parents, though, Speaker—it is not just parents. It is the Ontario Public School Boards Association that is calling on the government to change its decision, as are educators, labour, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth and the Ontario Autism Coalition. It's not too late for this Premier to do the right thing and show these children and their parents the respect that they deserve.

Will this Premier cancel her plan to cut off autism therapy for thousands of children that are currently on the waiting list?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Since we are talking about what's happening today, I thought I'd take a moment to explain the process and what is happening with families right now.

Every child who is receiving or is on a wait-list for IBI or ABA has been sent a letter from their service provider. Next week, service providers will start meeting with families who are transitioning from the wait-list; those are children over five who are on the IBI wait-list. Within 10 days of reviewing that situation, what we call an "eligibility agreement," those families will immediately receive \$8,000 so the children can come off the wait-list and into immediate service. All families should have completed those meetings by mid-June, and we'll be receiving very regular updates and reports from the service providers to make sure that's exactly what's happening. And I'll—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The parents who are here today know that their children can benefit from IBI therapy, and they know what life will be like for their children—for them and their children—without IBI therapy.

Last month, Kristen Ellison came to Queen's Park and she shared her story; it was heart-wrenching, Speaker. She said, "Realizing I may never hear 'Mom, I love you' is enough to kill a mother inside." That's what she said.

Will this Premier look these kids in the eye, look these parents in the eye, and tell them how she can so callously cut their children off from this life-changing therapy?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker.

I just have to say that the Premier and I are both very committed to continuing the dialogue with parents and continuing the dialogue with the autism organizations to make sure that this is being implemented as smoothly as it can and in a supportive way for families.

It's important for me to continue to get that feedback. I'm doing that every day. I am very happy to meet with families. I have enjoyed very much meeting with the children as well to hear about how things are going for them, whether they're in school now, whether they will be going to school, whether they have some combination of school and private support. I think it's very important, and I am in discussions with the Minister of Education about that—children who are in school.

That dialogue needs to continue, and I am open to all advice.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Ontario's energy sector should have one objective: making sure families and businesses have reliable, affordable and clean energy. But the Liberals looked at the energy sector and said, "What can this do for the Liberal Party?" So they cancelled gas plants to save seats, they cancelled wind contracts to save seats and they cancelled OPG nuclear plans after getting \$100,000 from private nuclear companies. The Premier decided to sell off Hydro One and use that sell-off to help the Liberal Party fill its war chest.

Enough is enough, Speaker. Will this Premier do the right thing and call a commission of inquiry?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, when we came into office, we had an unreliable electricity grid in Ontario. We have rebuilt and invested in more than 10,000 kilometres of line. We have shut down all of the coal plants in Ontario. We have no smog days in Ontario now. By doing that, we took the single most important action to reduce climate change in North America.

We have clean, renewable energy. We have an industry in Ontario that was jump-started because of our decisions to invest in and promote renewable energy. We have made a decision around building transit that is leading to the broadening of the ownership of Hydro One. I know the NDP doesn't support our investments in transit, but that's—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: And we have electricity rates that families can't afford and that are driving business and industry out of this province. Congratulations to the Premier on that.

Yesterday, I asked the Premier about the fifth OPP anti-rackets investigation into her government. When

asked about cancelling this wind contract to save Liberal seats, the Premier said they “made a decision to gather evidence and to look at the research.” Actually, the OPP is investigating this situation because it’s alleged that the government wasn’t gathering evidence; it was deleting evidence—again.

The Premier insists that everything is just fine. Will she actually prove that by calling a commission of inquiry to ensure that the awarding and cancelling of energy contracts in this province isn’t corrupt?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It’s interesting that the leader of the third party talked about our economic situation and companies coming to this province. Ontario is one of the leaders in economic growth in this country. I don’t know what the leader of the third party is talking about, but we were the number one jurisdiction for foreign direct investment for two years in a row in North America. There’s something going on here that means that businesses are growing, expanding and coming to Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, we made a decision on offshore wind power. There is decades of evidence in terms of research, as I said, in terms of land-based wind turbines. That same body of research does not exist for offshore. We are doing that research and we await the recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government has used Ontario’s energy system to abuse fundraising rules and fill the Liberal war chest. They have cancelled energy contracts to try to win seats. Energy policy should be about energy, not about political benefits for the Liberal Party.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Labour, come to order.

1100

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People deserve a system that works for them, not just for the Ontario Liberal Party.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Trinity–Spadina, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Will this Premier call a Charbonneau-type commission for Ontario, a commission of inquiry on the awarding and management of public contracts in the energy industry?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, again, there are a number of issues that the leader of the third party has raised. She talked about fundraising, and of course she doesn’t want to talk about the substance of fundraising changes that we’re making. We’ve asked for input on draft legislation; she doesn’t want to talk about that.

The reality is that we made a decision. We made a decision in terms of offshore wind turbines. There is not the research that has been done on land-based wind turbines for offshore freshwater turbines—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We take our record-keeping responsibilities very, very seriously. We have changed the rules. There is training that has been done across government to make sure that records are retained in the way that they should be.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Premier. I have a constituent, Stephanie, from Cannington, whose son, Dax, has been on a wait-list for IBI since he was diagnosed with autism at two and a half years old. Dax has received ABA at a cost of \$20,000 out of his family’s own pockets, but after two years, Dax is still considered non-verbal and needs more intensive IBI therapy in order for him to communicate with his own mother.

Dax was getting close to the top of the list for IBI, where he could have had the therapy he needed in order to have a better future. But last month, Stephanie was told that her son was being removed from the wait-list because he is over five years old. But we all know that autism doesn’t end at five.

Mr. Speaker, why does the Premier think it is acceptable to shorten wait-lists by kicking children off?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member for her question. It’s important to note that what is driving this change, Speaker, is not wait-list reduction. It’s about providing better service, at the right time and at the right intensity, for all children with autism.

This family is a good example of where, yes, he’ll be removed from that particular wait-list, but into immediate service with the \$8,000. Most of those children in that kind of situation are already on the ABA wait-list, so it should be a fairly quick and seamless transition to the new expanded program, where it will be more customized, it will be more intense and of longer duration for that child.

It’s important we convey how this is going to work. I expect the service providers will continue to provide that kind of information to the families as we go forward. If that’s not the case, I want to hear about it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Premier. For the last year a young constituent in my riding, Xavier, has received 30 hours of IBI therapy per week through the direct funding model. As of May 1, Xavier is no longer eligible for support because Xavier turned six and was determined to be too old for your government’s new model.

After years of paperwork, assessment and wait-lists, Xavier and other children like him in Sarnia–Lambton will now only have access to IBI therapy if their parents can afford the full cost. In Xavier’s case, that’s nearly \$11,000 per month.

Will you commit today, Premier, to rethink your plan so that children in Sarnia–Lambton like Xavier get the

therapy they would benefit from the most, not just the therapy they can afford?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Sarnia—Lambton for the question. This is a good example of a real situation where a child is in IBI currently. They are not being removed immediately from therapy; as I said earlier, they will have a clinical assessment at six months, and they may or may not taper off to the new program. It's going to depend on that clinical assessment, and it is up to the experts to assess that child and determine what the best path forward is for that child. The principle will always be that they get the right amount of service, the right intensity for the right duration.

I have heard the comment about direct funding, and again, I've been talking to the coalitions and the alliances and parents about those options going forward. I am open to that as we go forward to implement the program further.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Premier. Hundreds of parents of children with autism have once again come to Queen's Park to protest the Premier's decision to take away essential therapy from kids. They have been outside Liberal MPPs' offices. They have been blocked by Liberal MPPs on Twitter for simply requesting a meeting.

If taking away essential therapy from kids with autism is defensible, why won't the Liberal members meet with parents? Even the Liberal member from Beaches—East York—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. I'd like to deal with somebody on this side. It's not helpful.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Exactly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Burlington, come to order. The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, come to order. There were a few others I had in my mind, but I was not allowed to do what I was going to do.

Finish your question, please.

Miss Monique Taylor: If taking away essential therapy from kids with autism is defensible, why won't these Liberal members meet with parents? Even the Liberal MPP—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Finish your question, please.

Miss Monique Taylor: It appears that the Liberal caucus is divided on this matter, Speaker. Some will have the spine to stand up for kids with autism, but most of them won't.

Knowing this, will the Premier slow down, do the right thing and immediately stop changes to autism services—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I believe that this issue is essentially a nonpartisan issue. I believe that this is about children who need more service.

I will say, if that's the tone that the third party and this member want to take, I know for a fact that members of my caucus are meeting with the people who come to their offices—all of them. I honestly don't think that it's befitting this discussion to take it to that level.

The reality is that we are looking for a solution. This is a complex issue. We are putting \$333 million in to solve this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary, please.

Miss Monique Taylor: Speaker, they can say whatever they want, but there are snapshots and photographs of parents being blocked.

Kids with autism have been taken off the IBI wait-list. They're being told that they will have to wait for years to get this so-called "enhanced program." But nobody knows what the enhanced program even is.

Even the school boards are sounding the alarms, asking this government to rethink this decision. Apparently, the new program may include group therapy instead of one-on-one support. This is just plain wrong. Implementation has already been disastrous. It's really time to slow down.

Speaker, will the Premier look up at all the parents who are here today and tell them that she will do the right thing and stop her changes to autism services?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to be able to talk about some of the work—

Miss Monique Taylor: Who were you elected to represent—Kids or the Liberals? Tell me.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're not helping.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If it continues, the member will be named.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton Mountain is named.

Miss Taylor was escorted from the chamber.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Labour, second time. The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, second time. Oh, I've got a good memory.

This is from before, while I was waiting. I don't need to explain myself.

New question.

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour la procureure générale et la ministre responsable—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Forgive my interference; I forgot to finish the minister's answer.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Yes, I was actually looking forward to giving the answer, Speaker.

We've actually invested \$77 million in school boards specifically for programs for children with autism. Our focus has been on strengthening the ABA capacity for school-age children. This has included targeted funding for ABA training at the Geneva Centre for Autism to train teachers' assistants—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Windsor West, come to order.

Please finish.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Since the summer of 2006, we've actually provided almost \$49 million to boards to hire and train professionals with ABA expertise to support principals, teachers and multidisciplinary transition teams. To date, more than 20,000 educators have been trained to prepare them to offer ABA support services in publicly funded school boards.

ACCÈS À LA JUSTICE

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Maintenant, ma question est pour la procureure générale et la ministre responsable des Affaires francophones.

L'accès à la justice en français touche vos deux portefeuilles ministériels. Votre ministère a depuis de nombreuses années un plan stratégique dans le secteur de la justice qui a, en fait, été reconnu comme une pratique exemplaire par l'Office des affaires francophones, le commissaire aux services en français de l'Ontario et d'autres intervenants.

Le rapport de réponse du comité directeur de 2015 intitulé Améliorer l'accès à la justice en français, décrit des solutions qui ont été mises en oeuvre dans l'objectif d'améliorer les droits linguistiques en français de la population ontarienne.

Madame la Ministre, pourriez-vous partager avec la Chambre des exemples de solutions dans le rapport et les progrès accomplis pour soutenir l'accès à la justice en français en Ontario?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je voudrais remercier le député d'Etobicoke-Nord pour sa question très intéressante.

Oui, notre gouvernement s'est engagé à faire la promotion des droits et services en français au sein du système de justice et à assurer que tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes aient un accès égal et approprié au système de justice de l'Ontario dans la langue officielle de leur choix.

Le droit à un procès en français et à une enquête préliminaire dans les affaires criminelles et à des

instances bilingues dans les affaires de droits civils sans jury, de droit de la famille, devant la Cour des petites créances et relevant de la Loi sur les infractions provinciales, existe partout en Ontario. Tous les tribunaux administratifs qui relèvent de la compétence de mon ministère tiennent des audiences bilingues sur demande.

Chaque année, des intervenants et des cadres supérieurs du ministère se réunissent pour établir les priorités dans le domaine des services en français et pour faire état des progrès accomplis. J'ai participé vendredi dernier à une réunion de mise—

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci.

Question supplémentaire?

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Je suis ravi de voir que le gouvernement fait tout ce qu'il peut pour améliorer l'accès à la justice en français pour les francophones de la province.

Je comprends que le ministère a commencé un projet pilote en partenariat avec les juges en chef de l'Ontario pour offrir des services en français au palais de justice d'Ottawa. Cela inclut un comité d'engagement communautaire juridique pour développer des stratégies dans le but de maximiser la présence de ce projet pilote. Les membres du système judiciaire et les membres du barreau d'Ottawa sont engagés dans ce comité.

Est-ce que la ministre peut nous en dire un peu plus à propos de ce projet?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: En effet, le député a raison. En mai 2015, j'ai été très fière de lancer ce projet pilote qui fournit un accès fluide et opportun à la justice en français au palais de justice d'Ottawa. En partenariat avec les juges en chef de l'Ontario, le projet pilote aide à réduire tout obstacle pour les parties, les avocats et les utilisateurs francophones du système judiciaire de l'Ontario à Ottawa.

En plus de ces services offerts en français, le projet offre davantage d'annonces bilingues au public, des renseignements juridiques sur les droits et les services en français affichés sur les écrans dans les palais de justice et davantage d'affichage indiquant que les services en français sont offerts sur place. Le projet pilote d'Ottawa nous aidera à cerner les pratiques exemplaires pouvant assurer l'amélioration de l'accès à la justice en français pour toute la population.

Alors, oui, vendredi dernier il y avait un rapport d'étape et j'y ai participé. Il y a un bel engouement pour offrir de plus en plus de services de justice en français en Ontario.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Premier. My constituent Valerie Brodrick's grandson is one of the children whose treatment you're withholding because he is five. In Valerie's words, "He has now been considered trash, unfixable because of his age. The provincial lifetime buyout to parents of \$8,000 when therapy can cost

up to \$5,000 a year—is this what you call equality for children in Ontario?”

Mr. Speaker, this is inherently wrong. Families should not go bankrupt in order to pay for treatment for their child. This goes beyond just being a critical health issue. Withholding IBI treatment violates the child's rights.

I want to know: Will the Premier recognize IBI as medically necessary treatment and pay for it for all Ontario children who need it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member for the question.

We know that wait times have increased, but more importantly, children who need services are not getting it. That's why we're making this investment. We are investing the 333 million new dollars on top of the \$190 million we spend each and every year on this program so that families don't have to wait longer.

We want to make sure they get into service and off wait-lists wherever possible. That's why, in this particular case, this child will be transitioned and the family will have the \$8,000. Then they will move up the wait-list for the new program and, hopefully, be at the top of that wait-list at the end of the \$8,000, and get the intensity and the duration of the services that they need to reach their full potential. That's my commitment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary. The member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is also to the Premier. On Monday, I told this House about Lawson, a six-year-old with autism who is being cut off IBI. Today I'm rising on behalf of Xavier, a five-year-old from Oxford with autism. He has been on the waiting list for IBI since he was three years old. In January, he finally started receiving therapy. His mother says you cannot even express the emotional factor when her five-year-old spoke to her for essentially the first time. Then she got the devastating news that Xavier's IBI is being phased out immediately, because at age five, the government says, he's too old.

Will the Premier reconsider and give Xavier and other children like him the services they need and depend upon?

1120

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member for his question.

My message to Xavier's family is that I want to make sure he gets the right support at the right time and that he has every potential to succeed in his life, whatever Xavier decides to do. It sounds like he's in therapy already; he will not be removed immediately from therapy.

As I said before, children who are in IBI therapy over the age of five will be assessed by a clinician and then the plan will go from there, in terms of what's the right intensity and duration for that child. If they are transitioning off, it would be a tapered process. It would not be sudden. We want to make sure it's as seamless as possible, that families get the support they need, both

directly from the autism funding program but our other programs that support these children as well: speech and language, respite for the parents, and so on. Those all continue.

MEMBER'S CONDUCT

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. Last year, your Minister of Energy made sexist and patronizing remarks about Ontario's Auditor General. Then he doubled down, calling our leader, the leader of Ontario's NDP, “that woman.” Yesterday he made comments again about our leader that were sexist, unparliamentary and don't bear repeating. Surely, the Liberal code of conduct doesn't say that comparing women to dogs is okay. Premier, it's never okay. A code of conduct obviously doesn't go far enough. It's 2016. When is enough enough?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The minister has clarified his remarks, and he has—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The minister has clarified his remarks. He has been clear that he understands—we all understand—that offensive language has no place in this Legislature. As the Ottawa Citizen reported, Karen Fischer, the managing editor of the transcription service of the Legislature, said that based on the audio, they decided that “she's—she's all over the map” was the right representation of the words. Sometimes—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Order.

A one sentence wrap-up, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I was in the House at the time. Sometimes people do stumble over their words. The minister has apologized for any misunderstanding.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: A year ago the Minister of Energy decided to “mansplain” the electricity system to Ontario's Auditor General, even though she spent 10 years at Manitoba Hydro. Then, yesterday, he decided to continue this pattern of degrading and disrespecting women. The minister's conduct was again an embarrassment to this assembly. No woman should have to put up with this kind of casual sexism.

Here at Queen's Park we should be leading by example. The Premier's credibility on sexual violence and harassment is being called into question. As she says, it's never okay, not even for her own caucus members and certainly not for her cabinet members. Will the Premier do what she should have done a year ago and show the Minister of Energy the door?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark knows well what my concern is about what he just did.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The minister came into the House yesterday afternoon. He made an apology. He explained what had happened. He was very clear with the people of the—with the Legislature—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd prefer not the armchair decisions, please. The member from Prince Edward-Hastings will withdraw.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'll withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There was somebody else who said something unparliamentary, and I wish that that would not happen any longer.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is entirely appropriate, and it is what I would expect of one of my members: If there was a misunderstanding, if something was said that was inappropriate, that there would be an apology, that there would be an explanation. That is exactly what has happened.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, you recently announced that Ontario's high school graduation rate is now at its highest level in the province's history. Congratulations.

In 2015, the five-year graduation rate surpassed the government's goal of 85%. Now, more Ontario students than ever before are graduating with the skills and knowledge they need to reach their full potential. I think that's fantastic news.

I know students in my riding of Halton are working hard because graduation rates have also risen there to 89.9% in the district school board and to 92.4% in the Catholic school board.

Investing in our young people is a top priority for this government. Specialist High Skills Major programs help students graduate and provide them with more opportunities for future careers.

The minister announced recently that the Specialist High Skills Major program has been expanded.

Minister, can you please tell us more about this important announcement?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I want to thank the member for the question and for her support of Specialist High Skills Majors.

Yesterday morning, I visited Bishop Marrocco/Thomas Merton Catholic Secondary School here in Toronto, where we announced that Ontario is expanding two programs. First, we are expanding the Specialist High Skills Major program to accommodate an additional 2,000 students in just over 100 new programs for the 2016-17 school year. That will bring us to a total of more than 48,000 students who will be enrolled in 1,835 Specialist High Skills Majors across the province.

Second, we are expanding the Dual Credit Program, where students have one credit—partly high school, partly college—and that will be expanded to include 400 more students next year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Minister, I am pleased to hear that the expansion of the Specialist High Skills Major program will enable students to focus on graduating and will assist them in pursuing their post-secondary goals. This is a significant step toward securing a good future for themselves and their families.

This specialized program allows students to target their learning in a specific economic sector while also meeting the requirements for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma. It helps students make the important transition from high school to apprenticeship training, college, university or the workplace.

Mr. Speaker, I've seen first-hand just how great some of these programs are. In fact, I toured some of them in Halton with the minister, including a fantastic aquaponics program at Notre Dame Catholic Secondary School. These programs are a key part of our government's commitment to keep young people engaged.

Minister, please explain how the Specialist High Skills Major program benefits students.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Just following up on what the member said, the aquaponics program was really cool because it wasn't just horticulture; it actually combined the computer tech students who were doing the control systems for the hydroponics. So it was a very cool example of things that you can do with Specialist High Skills Majors.

One of the things that's happening in 2016-17 is that all of the SHSM programs will have access to an innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship module that was developed in partnership with the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management.

District school boards report that the Specialist High Skills Major program is particularly engaging for students considering college and workplace destinations. Students taking workplace courses achieve credits at the rate of 94% in their SHSM, as opposed to non—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mrs. Julia Munro: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Ross, a constituent in my riding, contacted me about his daughter Serenity. Serenity has autism, as does his older son. Serenity had the opportunity to experience five weeks of IBI therapy, and grew remarkably during this time. It is almost time for her six-month reassessment, and by all indications she will lose this vital therapy. To make matters worse, nobody, not even the providers, has a clear understanding of what the enhanced ABA treatment actually is.

1130

Serenity's family followed the rules, but at the stroke of a pen saw their daughter's opportunities disappear. How do you explain to her father that there is fairness in a system that denies her treatment that she has been waiting for for years?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the Minister of Children and Youth Services has said, the point of the

changes we're making is that Serenity needs to be able to continue the service and the intensity of the therapy that she needs. That is exactly why we are doing this: So that young people who are sitting on a waiting list—now, Serenity is already getting service, so we want to make sure that she can continue with the intensity that she needs.

That's why the programs need to be tailored. That's why the assessment—as the minister has said, there will be a look at what kind of service needs to continue. If that intensity is necessary, then that's what she will get going forward.

But our deep concern is that there are children sitting on a waiting list who are not getting any service. That is unacceptable. It cannot go on. That is why we are making this investment.

As I said about the comments of the leader of the third party, I agree that the implementation is extremely important. Parents need to understand. The ministry is working with providers to make sure that people get the information that will help them understand what's going to happen.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary. The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Kristen Tignanelli lives in North Bay. Her son Luca was diagnosed with autism at the age of three. Luca previously qualified for IBI therapy, but when Kristen recently reapplied, she was told he could no longer receive the important therapy he needs. You see, Luca had recently turned five, and he no longer meets the arbitrary age cut-off imposed by the government.

This government has a responsibility to ensure individuals with autism can realize their full potential. Instead, after years of waste, scandal and mismanagement, the Premier is attempting to balance the budget on the backs of the most vulnerable. Will the Premier reverse the changes to IBI and help Luca—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

One-sentence wrap-up, please.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Will the Premier reverse the changes to IBI and help Luca realize his full potential?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I have a responsibility as the Minister of Children and Youth Services to make sure we're doing absolutely everything we can to help children with autism and all children with special needs reach their full potential. That's why we're making this historic investment. That's why we're cutting wait times for services.

It is precisely this kind of situation which the member opposite is talking about, where unfortunately the youngest children who would benefit the most from intensive IBI are not getting it. That's why we have to change this system. But for that particular child, we want to make sure the transition to the new program is as smooth and

successful as possible, that that child gets the intensive supports they need going forward and that they get a flexible program that meets their needs, and for the right duration.

My commitment is to all children with autism in Ontario. I will not waiver from my commitment to these children. We'll keep working—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. No matter who you are, the health of your family comes first, and it should come first for the government, too. But this Premier's hospital cuts are hurting patient care across southwestern Ontario.

In the past four months alone—just the past four months, Speaker—we've seen 169 nurses cut in Windsor, almost 125 jobs cut from hospitals in London, 68 in Kitchener and another 12 health care workers cut in Sarnia. The list goes on and on.

Patients and families know exactly what that means. It means less care and longer wait times for people in the emergency room, for seniors who need surgery and for mums and dads with sick children. Why is this Premier turning her back on the people of southwestern Ontario by cutting the hospital care that every family depends on?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The leader of the third party knows that we're making important investments in our health care system, to the tune of an additional \$1 billion this year—so almost \$52 billion spent on health care. That's 25% of the government's budget—sorry; that's nearly 45% of the government's budget.

Specifically, when it comes to our hospitals, the new, additional \$345-million investment that we have in our budget—which includes a 1% increase to the base budget of hospitals, which is part of the funding they receive—overall, it's a 2.1% increase, far above the rate of inflation, that will allow our hospitals to invest in our front-line health care workers. It will allow our hospitals to ensure that they're providing the highest-quality services for Ontarians, services that Ontarians deserve.

We're doing much more on the capital side as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier and her health minister should pay less attention to their own spin and more attention to patients in southwestern Ontario. Health care is the silent crisis of this Liberal government, and this Premier is only making problems worse.

St. Joe's in London say that they've seen a \$36.5-million reduction to their total budget over the past four years.

London Health Sciences said that this year marks the fifth year in a row that funding will not keep up with inflationary pressures. That's not me, Speaker; that is what London Health Sciences is saying.

Across the southwest, from Sarnia to Wallaceburg to St. Thomas to Kitchener, hospitals are cutting patient care and they are laying off dedicated front-line caregivers. That is the fact. The very people who save lives and provide exceptional care when families need it the most are being given a pink slip.

When will this Premier start putting the best interests of patients first for a change and stop the Liberal cuts to hospitals across southwestern Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know that yesterday I talked about the fact that the NDP, when they were in government, closed 24% of the hospital beds in the province and 13% of the mental health budget. They cut hospital funding in their last year, but I think it's fair to talk about more recent as well: that in the 2014 election campaign, when they committed to finding \$600 million, the leader of the third party refused to identify where that would come from.

Fortunately, the candidate for Kitchener–Waterloo was forced to admit that the health care and post-secondary education sectors were singled out for their deepest cuts. She said that—in fact, it's quoted on CBC News—the minister would look to find efficiencies—sorry, the new accountability minister that they talked about would find efficiencies in the health care and post-secondary education sectors. When the member for Kitchener was pressed on it, she said, “I would go first to health” to find that \$600 million in cuts.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Granville Anderson: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, I understand that your ministry is making significant capital investments as part of the 2016 budget to expand and improve post-secondary learning spaces across this province.

This is excellent news, as many students in Durham are now starting to think about post-secondary education. The concerted effort of strengthening and modernizing OSAP, combined with boosting the capacity and educational environments of universities and colleges, is a well-coordinated commitment.

Minister, could you please inform the House of one particular capital announcement that you made recently at Durham College?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member from Durham for that question as well as for his tireless advocacy on behalf of Durham College and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology.

Last month, with the member from Durham, I was pleased to announce that our government is investing \$22 million to support a new Centre for Collaborative Education at Durham College. This new facility will replace the historic Simcoe Building. It will also feature a business incubator to connect student entrepreneurs with local experts to launch the start of companies; modern labs for Durham's health programs, with new courses in pharmacy and behavioural sciences; and a space for the Global Class initiative to offer online lectures to connect students with thinkers from all over the world.

This project is a part of Ontario's plan to provide \$3 billion in capital funding to our post-secondary institutions across the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you to the minister for that answer. By the way, Speaker, this was one event where the member who represents the riding didn't bother showing up to that announcement.

Now, I understand that in addition to the recent Durham College announcement, the 2016 budget also included funding for several other capital projects, including a very exciting one in downtown Toronto at OCAD University. The residents of Durham will be glad to hear this, as I am sure that many of them are interested in pursuing a degree in the arts and design.

Minister, would you please inform the House on the importance of these capital investments, with specific reference to the OCAD University capital investment that you announced this past April?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, I want to thank the member from Durham. Last April, with the help of the member from Spadina—

Interjection: Trinity–Spadina.

Hon. Reza Moridi: —Trinity–Spadina, I was pleased to announce that our government will be investing \$27 million into the OCAD University campus expansion project. The project is called OCAD University Creative City Campus, and it will lead to the expansion and refurbishment of studio spaces and fabrication technology at 100 McCaul Street; the creation of collaborative learning spaces in the Sharp Centre for Design, including new shared student spaces, a student commons and an indigenous visual culture centre; and an expansion of the Art and Design Library for the Future and development of a centre for experiential learning.

Mr. Speaker, this project will provide OCAD University students with vastly expanded and improved learning facilities, including a modernization of its hallmark studio-based learning facilities.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Kitchener–Waterloo has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Premier concerning the code of conduct. This matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the amendment to the motion for allocation of time on Bill 186, An Act to establish the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1142 to 1147.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On May 4, Mr. Naqvi moved government notice of motion number 65. Mr. Smith then moved that the motion be amended as follows:

“That the section beginning, ‘That the Standing Committee on Social Policy be authorized to meet at its regularly scheduled times’ be struck out and replaced by:

“That the Standing Committee on Social Policy be authorized to meet at its regularly scheduled times on Monday, May 16, 2016”—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Agreed.

We are now dealing with Mr. Smith's amendment to the motion. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Nicholls, Rick
Arnott, Ted	Hatfield, Percy	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Hillier, Randy	Scott, Laurie
Brown, Patrick	Horwath, Andrea	Singh, Jagmeet
Clark, Steve	Hudak, Tim	Smith, Todd
Coe, Lorne	Jones, Sylvia	Tabuns, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	MacLeod, Lisa	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	Martow, Gila	Walker, Bill
French, Jennifer K.	McDonell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Yurek, Jeff
Gretzky, Lisa	Munro, Julia	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Anderson, Granville	Hoggarth, Ann	Moridi, Reza
Baker, Yvan	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Ballard, Chris	Hunter, Mitzie	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Kiwala, Sophie	Potts, Arthur
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	MacCharles, Tracy	Sandals, Liz
Coteau, Michael	Malhi, Harinder	Sergio, Mario
Crack, Grant	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Martins, Cristina	Takhar, Harinder S.
Del Duca, Steven	Matthews, Deborah	Thibeault, Glenn
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	McGarry, Kathryn	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dong, Han	McMahon, Eleanor	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 38; the nays are 50.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the amendment lost.

Are the members ready to vote on the main motion?

Mr. Naqvi has moved government notice of motion number 65. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1151 to 1152.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Anderson, Granville	Hoggarth, Ann	Moridi, Reza
Baker, Yvan	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Ballard, Chris	Hunter, Mitzie	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Kiwala, Sophie	Potts, Arthur
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	MacCharles, Tracy	Sandals, Liz
Coteau, Michael	Malhi, Harinder	Sergio, Mario
Crack, Grant	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Martins, Cristina	Takhar, Harinder S.
Del Duca, Steven	Matthews, Deborah	Thibeault, Glenn
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	McGarry, Kathryn	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dong, Han	McMahon, Eleanor	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Nicholls, Rick
Arnott, Ted	Hatfield, Percy	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Hillier, Randy	Scott, Laurie
Brown, Patrick	Horwath, Andrea	Singh, Jagmeet
Clark, Steve	Hudak, Tim	Smith, Todd
Coe, Lorne	Jones, Sylvia	Tabuns, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	MacLeod, Lisa	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	Martow, Gila	Walker, Bill
French, Jennifer K.	McDonell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Yurek, Jeff
Gretzky, Lisa	Munro, Julia	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 50; the nays are 38.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

HEALTH INFORMATION PROTECTION ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA PROTECTION DES RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LA SANTÉ

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 119, An Act to amend the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, to make certain related amendments and to repeal and replace the Quality of Care Information Protection Act, 2004 / Projet de loi 119, Loi visant à modifier la Loi de 2004 sur la protection des renseignements personnels sur la santé, à apporter certaines modifications connexes et à abroger et à remplacer la Loi de 2004 sur la protection des renseignements sur la qualité des soins.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1155 to 1156.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On Wednesday, May 4, 2016, Mr. Hoskins moved third reading of Bill 119, An Act to amend the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, to make certain related amendments and to repeal and replace the Quality of Care Information Protection Act, 2004.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gates, Wayne	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Anderson, Granville	Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Moridi, Reza
Baker, Yvan	Hatfield, Percy	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Ballard, Chris	Hoggarth, Ann	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Horwath, Andrea	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Hoskins, Eric	Potts, Arthur
Chan, Michael	Hunter, Mitzie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	Kiwala, Sophie	Sandals, Liz
Coteau, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Crack, Grant	Lalonde, Marie-France	Singh, Jagmeet
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Del Duca, Steven	Malhi, Harinder	Tabuns, Peter
Dhillon, Vic	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dickson, Joe	Mantha, Michael	Thibeault, Glenn
DiNovo, Cheri	Martins, Cristina	Vanthof, John
Dong, Han	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Fife, Catherine	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McGarry, Kathryn	Zimmer, David
Fraser, John	McMahon, Eleanor	
French, Jennifer K.	Meilleur, Madeleine	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Scott, Laurie
Brown, Patrick	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	Martow, Gila	Thompson, Lisa M.
Coe, Lorne	McDonnell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Fedeli, Victor	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Hillier, Randy	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 64; the nays are 24.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes.

This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1159 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BAPTISM OF POLAND

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Today, I have the honour to rise and recognize the 1,050th anniversary of the baptism of Poland. The introduction of Christianity in its western form with the baptism of Prince Mieszko I in 966 was

one the most pivotal moments in Polish history. This event had profound consequences and determined the future destiny of the country and its people. It marks the symbolic founding of the first Polish state and lays the major foundations of Polish identity and culture.

It is also the traditional starting point of Poland's recorded history. Mieszko's acceptance of Roman Christianity, through his marriage to Dobrawa, a Czech princess, has shaped the course of Polish history and identity up to this day, 1,050 years later. As a result, literacy, law, education, early use of the Polish language, institutions of higher learning, music and architecture developed within the Christian framework.

Ontario is home to a half a million Canadians of Polish heritage. We are very proud of the contribution Polish Canadians have made to our province since first settling here more than 155 years ago.

Speaker, on behalf of our leader, Patrick Brown, and the entire Ontario PC caucus, I'd like to extend my warmest wishes to all Poles celebrating the 1,050th anniversary of the baptism of Poland today.

TAMIL GENOCIDE REMEMBRANCE MONTH

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: May is Tamil Genocide Remembrance Month, and while it's absolutely important to remember the tragedies, including the human rights violations, the war crimes and, in fact, the genocide that the Tamil community has endured, it's also important to note that these adversities are ongoing and the Tamil community continues to face oppression at the hands of the Sri Lankan government.

Despite these adversities, the Tamil community has shown such tremendous resilience. In fact, they continue to thrive in the diaspora. In addition, they've shown inspirational commitment to celebrating their arts, music, culture and, in fact, their language. It's something that inspires us all.

On a personal note as a Sikh, our community has also endured genocide, and it's for that reason I also stand in solidarity with the Tamil community.

In addition, Andrea Horwath and all New Democrats stand in solidarity with the Tamil community in remembering the past injustices and the ongoing oppression. We also stand in solidarity with the ongoing struggle for a permanent solution based on peace, freedom and justice for the Tamil people in their nation of Tamil Eelam.

On May 9, at 3 p.m., the NDP will be hosting a memorial event to remember the genocide and all those who lost their lives. It will be held at 3 p.m. in the NDP caucus boardroom.

SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Vic Dhillon: It's an honour to rise in this House and recognize May as South Asian Heritage Month.

As the General Conference of UNESCO rightly asserted, "Cultural diversity is as necessary for human-

kind as biodiversity is for nature.” In December 2001, the government of Ontario passed the South Asian Heritage Act, proclaiming the month of May as South Asian Heritage Month and May 5 as South Asian Arrival Day. This is a time to acknowledge, reflect on and celebrate the rich history of South Asians in Ontario.

As many of you know, Ontario has a large South Asian population, made up of immigrants from, and descendants of, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and many other countries. South Asians have been settling in Ontario since the beginning of the 20th century. We don't have to look far to get a sense of the experience that members of the South Asian community had while settling in Ontario.

My family came to Canada in the 1960s. It wasn't easy. It was hard, just like it would be to settle in any other place, especially a new country. But we were fortunate enough to be rewarded for our hard work, and I feel it's my responsibility and my family's responsibility to do the same for the people that will be following us in the future.

As I know, this is an experience that many Ontarians can relate to. As a member of Ontario's South Asian community, I'm proud to say that the South Asian community has provided another layer of colour, tradition and heritage to the multicultural fabric of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to finish by saying that I know first-hand that the values of South Asian are the values of Ontarians, and my caucus continues to stand firmly with the South Asian community of Ontario.

INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY SECTOR IN DURHAM

Mr. Lorne Coe: I would like to outline what we're doing in Durham region with our innovation and technology sector.

The Spark Centre in particular inspires entrepreneurs to start and grow successful, innovative companies. Since arriving in Whitby–Oshawa in 2010, Spark has helped more than 700 local companies get off the ground. Spark works to improve Durham region's competitiveness and visibility as a world-class innovation cluster. It elevates and supports key industry sectors, including health, manufacturing, digital media and high-tech, among many others.

Helping feed the increasing demand for jobs in these sectors are the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, Trent University and Durham College. They're perfectly positioned to encourage the growth of the innovation and technology sector in Durham region.

But the business growth cannot continue without matching support for our universities and colleges. Properly funding higher education and, in particular, bridging the skills gap will create the path to jobs, and that's what this province so desperately needs.

We have such a great and growing opportunity in Durham region. We want to ensure that particularly the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, Trent

University and Durham College are properly positioned to feed the need in this innovation and technology sector.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Paul Miller: Hydro One crews recently clear-cut the trees and sprayed herbicide all along Hamilton's beautiful beach trail. Instead of working with the city to protect both the trail and the transmission wires, Hydro One has left only stumps of what was once a prized Hamilton attraction.

Now, Speaker, Hydro One is going to clear-cut a strip the width of a football field right up the Red Hill Valley. Local residents have protested. The local councillor and I have asked them to consult with residents and to work with the city to find a better way.

In March, Hydro One promised my office that it would organize a community meeting to address residents' concerns, but that never happened. Hydro One doesn't care about consultation. Now it plans to begin clear-cutting in a week and a half. There is no accountability. Hydro One, which is still 70% publicly owned, told our constituents to go to the Ontario Energy Board. The energy board said it has no authority. The ministry says that Hydro One is no longer a public institution, so call Hydro One's community line.

No one, Speaker, is taking responsibility. No one is listening. The Red Hill Valley is an environmentally and culturally sensitive piece of land. If Hydro One can clear-cut a trail and spray herbicide at will, then our environmental and cultural legislation exists only at the pleasure of big corporate interests.

MAISON VALE HOSPICE

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: “Everyone should be able to live and die in peace, with dignity, free of pain, surrounded by loved ones, in the setting of their choice.” That's the vision statement of the Maison Vale Hospice in Sudbury.

I'm very pleased to be able to stand up in this great Legislature today to talk about the great work that Maison Vale Hospice is doing in Sudbury and throughout northeastern Ontario.

This past weekend, my community came together to celebrate the hospice and also to help the hospice raise some much-needed funds. I'm very proud to say that, so far, over \$150,000 has been raised in the Hike for Hospice out of my community of Sudbury, and I know there are many other hikes for hospices right across our province and right across our great country.

1310

I also want to acknowledge that RBC has been a big sponsor for us in Sudbury. They have helped raise over a million dollars for our hospice in the last nine years. I've been there since the beginning, 10 years, in Sudbury. We see more and more participating every year. This year over a thousand participants helped raise money for this year and for that goal.

A quote by Mother Teresa was brought forward: “Not a lot of us can do great things. But we can all do small things with great love.” It was great to see over a thousand people in my riding doing small things with great love for a great organization.

TREE PLANTING

Mr. Ted Arnott: Last fall, this House unanimously passed our resolution calling on the government to establish an Ontario Green Legacy Programme. Based on the county of Wellington’s Green Legacy Programme, it would seek to plant 150 million trees, starting in 2017, to mark the 150th anniversary of Ontario within Confederation.

Last month, I organized and hosted a meeting in my office with senior Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry staff, including Deputy Minister Bill Thornton, as well as with Gary Cousins, Mark Van Patter and Rob Johnston from the county of Wellington. The meeting was productive and gave us the opportunity to discuss our Green Legacy Programme idea and make the case for a significant expansion of Ontario’s tree planting efforts.

It has now been more than six months since my resolution was passed, and 2017 is fast approaching. We need the government to make a public commitment to implement our Ontario Green Legacy Programme proposal. Again, our resolution was passed unanimously by this House, with members from all parties speaking in favour. If private members’ business is to be meaningful, the government needs to listen to the will of this House and not ignore it.

We know the government is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and they say they want to combat climate change. Again, I would suggest that an Ontario Green Legacy Programme could and should be part of this strategy. This is doable. We can harness the volunteer spirit of Ontarians and their noble desire to confront the climate change challenge head-on. I once again call upon the government to commit to establishing an Ontario Green Legacy Programme and immediately begin the work needed to launch this program next year.

TORONTO RAPTORS

Mr. Han Dong: Today, I would like to recognize the Toronto Raptors as they head into game 2 of the eastern semifinals of the NBA playoffs. After winning a tight series against the Indiana Pacers in an exciting game 7 finish, they look to tie the second round against “D-Wade” and the Miami Heat tonight at the ACC.

Mr. Speaker, the Raptors, along with the Jays, the Rock, TFC and the Marlies have brought excitement to Toronto sports fans, excitement that had been missing for a long, long time—the playoffs. You can feel the vibe downtown on a game day. The Raptors have encapsulated the spirit of Toronto and are bringing the people of Toronto and Ontario together under one banner. Each victory brings us closer together.

The Raptors are being supported by fans across the province. Even one of Ontario’s homegrown talents, Drake, has become a true ambassador for the team and the city, injecting passion and excitement into the community. This is a great example of how sports can inspire, unite and build a stronger community.

Good luck tonight, Raptors. All of Toronto and Ontario will be cheering for you. “We the North.”

JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Mike Colle: I’m here to speak to Jewish Heritage Month, May, as proclaimed by a bill passed in this Legislature. It declares the month of May every year as Jewish Heritage Month.

The Jewish community has had a presence in Ontario since the War of 1812. It is to be found in almost every small town, big town and across Ontario, whether it be South Porcupine, Bancroft, Hamilton, Oshawa or Peterborough. They’re in every community. They’ve been there as pioneers, building communities. They’ve worked in everything from small industry to agriculture to medicine.

They have built the foundation of many of our great institutions here in Ontario. For instance, down the street here we have Mount Sinai Hospital, founded by the Jewish community. In my own riding, I have Baycrest hospital.

We’ve got a great legacy of philanthropy, of entrepreneurship and of great service in the armed forces for all of our great wars.

In this month, I hope that in all of your communities, especially in Ottawa, you do something to recognize the members of the Jewish community who have contributed so much for the last couple of hundred years to make Ontario and Canada a great province and country.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements, and I make note that when one of the members from the government side was making a statement, his own members were heckling him for leaving out the Leafs. I just wanted to let you know that.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHILD CARE AND EARLY YEARS AMENDMENT ACT (WAITING LISTS), 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA GARDE D’ENFANTS ET LA PETITE ENFANCE (LISTES D’ATTENTE)

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 195, An Act to amend the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 / Projet de loi 195, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2014 sur la garde d’enfants et la petite enfance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The bill amends the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, to require every person that maintains a waiting list in respect of child care to prepare a written policy setting out how the waiting list is administered. It also prohibits persons from charging or accepting a fee or deposit before a child is admitted for child care, ending the process of charging people to be on a wait-list.

1733387 ONTARIO CORP. ACT, 2016

Mr. Dong moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr44, An Act to revive 1733387 Ontario Corp.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

PETITIONS

AUTOMOTIVE DEALERS

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Bill 152, the Cutting Red Tape for Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, 2015 is a vital tool that supports Ontario's auto sector by cutting red tape for dealers and consumers when a vehicle is purchased or leased; and

"Whereas, in 2011, the province of Ontario conducted a pilot project on in-house vehicle licensing at two new car dealerships that was well received by the participants; and

"Whereas the province of Quebec has permitted automobile dealers to conduct in-house vehicle registrations since 2003, with 700 dealers currently participating;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario immediately pass Bill 152 into law, to promote Ontario's auto retail sector by cutting red tape for motor vehicle dealers and consumers to save them time and money."

I'm happy to add my name and give it to page Benjamin.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "Nurses Know—Petition for Better Care.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas providing high-quality, universal, public health care is crucial for a fair and thriving Ontario; and

"Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to registered nurses (RNs) and hurt patient care; and

"Whereas, in 2015 alone, Ontario lost more than 1.5 million hours of RN care due to cuts; and

"Whereas procedures are being off-loaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and
1320

"Whereas funded services are being cut from hospitals and are not being provided in the community; and

"Whereas cutting skilled care means patients suffer more complications, readmissions and death;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

"Commit to restoring hospital base operating funding to at least cover the costs of inflation and population growth;

"Create a fully-funded multi-year health human resources plan to bring Ontario's ratio of registered nurses to population up to the national average;

"Ensure hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality and integrated care for clinical procedures and stop plans for moving such procedures into private, unaccountable clinics."

I sign this petition and give it page Faiz.

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children and youth living with asthma;

"Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on ... private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41" through to "third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I agree with the petition, affix my name and give it to Spencer.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Lorne Coe: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Minister of Children and Youth Services announced on March 29th that children with autism over five years old will be ineligible to receive intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) therapy; and

“Whereas in 2014-15 there were 16,158 children with autism on the wait-list for IBI and applied behavioural analysis (ABA) therapy; and

“Whereas approximately 3,500 children with autism that are on the wait-list or currently receiving therapy in Ontario will be ineligible to receive IBI therapy as a result of the minister’s decision; and

“Whereas children over the age of five still respond to therapy and IBI remains their best shot at learning to communicate with the world around them and developing a degree of independence;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“That the Minister of Children and Youth Services reverse her decision and allow children over five years old to have access to IBI therapy.”

I agree with the content and will affix my signature and provide it to page Julia.

NEWBORN HEALTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today being the International Day of the Midwife, I have decided to read a petition that was sent to me by Alexander Dolan from Woodbridge, but the signatures come from all over Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Health Protection and Promotion Act ... calls for the mandatory administration of erythromycin ointment as a prophylactic agent into the eyes of all newborns and specifies that the Health Care Consent Act ... does not apply to the prevention or treatment of communicable diseases of the eyes of the newborn;

“Whereas research evidence shows that the administration of erythromycin is ineffective at preventing infection;

“Whereas the Canadian Paediatric Society and the Association of Ontario Midwives call for the rescinding of the mandatory ocular prophylaxis laws;

“We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Health Protection and Promotion Act be amended to remove the forced administration of ophthalmic ointment.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Aadil to bring it to the Clerk.

MEN’S HEALTH

Mr. Joe Dickson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas men’s health is an integral component of population health, affecting Ontario families, communities, businesses and society;

“Whereas many men’s health issues—if not all—benefit from early diagnosis, which is most often achieved through proactive monitoring of health and regular examinations;

“Whereas the stigma associated with a number of men’s health issues, and the failure to conduct regular physical examinations, can be at least partially mitigated through increased public awareness and the sharing of personal stories;

“Whereas June is a special and significant month for men and their families, with the third Sunday in June recognized internationally as Father’s Day;

“Whereas groups like the Canadian Men’s Health Foundation are developing innovative tools and programs, like the YouCheck health awareness tool, that could be promoted during a dedicated awareness week;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To support increased awareness and advocacy of men’s health issues by working towards passage and adoption of Bill 170, An Act to proclaim the week immediately preceding the third Sunday in June as Men’s Health Awareness Week.”

Of course, I acknowledge the MPP from Beaches–East York for his initiation of that.

HOME CARE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a large number of petitions in support of personal support workers who work for the VON in Parry Sound. It reads:

“Whereas home care should be patient-centred and the priority is direct care, not profit; and

“Whereas the privatization of health services has led to the delivery of services that have become profit-driven rather than care-driven;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that home care be guided by the principle of caring for patients first, without regard for private profit-making.”

I support this petition and give it to Spencer.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Catherine Fife: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government recently announced plans to reform the way autism services are delivered in the province, which leaves children over the age of five with no access to intensive behavioural intervention (IBI); and

“Whereas in 2003, former Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty removed the previous age cap on IBI therapy, stating that Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six; and

“Whereas applied behaviour analysis (ABA) and intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) are the only rec-

ognized evidence-based practices known to treat autism spectrum disorder (ASD); and

“Whereas the combined number of children waiting for ABA and IBI therapies in Ontario is approximately”16,160; and

“Whereas wait-lists for services have become overwhelmingly long due to the chronic underfunding by this Liberal government;

“Whereas some families are being forced to re-mortgage houses or move to other provinces while other families have no option but to go without essential therapy; and

“Whereas the Premier and her government should not be balancing the budget on the backs of kids with ASD and their families;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to immediately ensure that all children currently on the waiting list for IBI therapy are grandfathered into the new program so they do not become a lost generation.”

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and it's about fluoridating all Ontario drinking water.

“Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

“Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

“Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I agree with the petition, affix my name and give it to Emma to bring to the table.

1330

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government recently announced plans to reform the way autism services are delivered in the province, which leaves children over the age of five with no access to intensive behavioural intervention (IBI); and

“Whereas in 2003, former Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty removed the previous age cap on IBI therapy, stating that Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six; and

“Whereas applied behaviour analysis (ABA) and intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) are the only recognized evidence-based practices known to treat autism spectrum disorder (ASD); and ...

“Whereas wait-lists for services have become overwhelmingly long due to the chronic underfunding by this Liberal government;

“Whereas some families are being forced to re-mortgage houses or move to other provinces while other families have no option but to go without essential therapy; and

“Whereas the Premier and her government should not be balancing the budget on the backs of kids with ASD and their families;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to immediately ensure that all children currently on the waiting list for IBI therapy are grandfathered into the new program so they do not become a lost generation.”

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it down with Brendan.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the provincial government has cancelled the Northlander passenger train which served the residents of northeastern Ontario; and

“Whereas the provincial government has closed bus stations and is cancelling bus routes despite promising enhanced bus services to replace the train; and

“Whereas the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission (ONTC) has been given a mandate that its motor coach division must be self-sustaining; and

“Whereas Metrolinx, the crown corporation that provides train and bus service in the GTA of Toronto, is subsidized by more than \$100 million annually; and

“Whereas the subsidy to Metrolinx has increased annually for the last seven years;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To direct the Minister of Northern Development and Mines to reverse the decision to cancel bus routes im-

mediately and to treat northerners equitably in decisions regarding public transportation.”

I wholeheartedly agree and will send it down with page Ayana.

UNADDRESSED MAIL

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas hundreds of Toronto residents have complained at all three levels of government, Toronto Police Service, and Canada Post about receiving an unsolicited publication pretending to be a community paper, the contents of which can be argued to be racist, sexist, homophobic and advocating violence, both in written content and the use of graphic imagery;

“Whereas the publication referenced above is not a ‘community paper’ in that it clearly indicates a subscription price ... on its cover;

“Whereas the publication referenced above is delivered without privacy packaging...;

“Whereas the publication referenced above should qualify as ‘non-mailable matter’ based on sections 1 and 2 of Canada Post’s published Non-mailable Matter guide, and that Canada Post continues to deliver such material...;

“Whereas Canada Post offers this ... service at an additional cost, a business practice that can be changed by the crown corporation;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To formally bring the issue of Canada Post’s ‘un-addressed mail service’ to the official attention of the Canadian government; to explain the necessity of updating the regulations of this service...; and to order that Canada Post adhere to and enforce its regulations, particularly those of non-mailable matter, in the interests of all Ontarians.”

I agree with this petition, sign it and leave it with page Alfred.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Bill Walker: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should proclaim the month of September as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month in Ontario, to recognize the gold ribbon as the awareness symbol of childhood cancer and to strongly encourage all citizens to join in the fight against childhood cancer.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Walker has moved private member’s notice of motion number

72. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s an honour for me to bring the childhood cancer awareness resolution forward for consideration. If supported by members today, then we will declare the month of September as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month in Ontario. Further, it will make the gold ribbon the symbol of childhood cancer awareness, a standard that is recognized worldwide and that should be recognized in Ontario too.

Before I begin, I would like to introduce a number of special guests who have joined us in support to observe this debate today. They are:

—Neal Rourke, an international childhood cancer advocate and Tribute Lighting Program volunteer coordinator with Childhood Cancer International. He is also a member of the US Coalition Against Childhood Cancer, CAC2; Canada’s Big Book of Care coalition of childhood cancer family financial and psychosocial support groups, and Advocacy for Canadian Childhood Oncology Research Network, Ac2orn; and, more importantly, the father of Brendan. Thank you for being here.

—Antonia Palmer, founder of Neuroblastoma Canada; co-founder of Ac2orn.

—Susan Kuczynski, parent liaison with Ontario Parents Advocating for Children with Cancer.

—Renee Simmons, parent liaison, family support specialist with Childcan London, Ontario.

—Kathleen Bernard, executive director, Childcan, from London.

—Natasha Bowes, senior manager, fund development, Childhood Cancer Canada.

—Clare Davenport, CEO, Childhood Cancer Canada.

—Patricia Zareba, fund development manager, Childhood Cancer Canada.

—Ron Mitchell, co-founder of Coast to Coast Against Cancer Foundation.

—Jacqui DeBique, communications and knowledge transfer manager, Pediatric Oncology Group of Ontario.

—Marjorie Morrison, CEO, Canadian Cancer Action Network.

Madam Speaker, I would also just like to read a little excerpt from a letter of support from Childcan; I’m going to summarize it by saying what I believe they really want people to hear: “We are wholeheartedly behind this resolution and the adoption of the gold ribbon as the awareness symbol of childhood cancer.”

Welcome and thank you to all of you for the key role you play in saving our children and youth and bringing childhood cancer awareness to the floor of this Legislature.

Madam Speaker, today we have an opportunity to support every family and child affected by this life-threatening illness, by passing my resolution. It’s often said that we do too many awareness bills and resolutions in this House. In a way, for some people, that may be true. But allow me to discuss my reasons for dedicating

my private member's ballot date to the children and youth living with cancer in Ontario.

Somewhere this very moment there is a family packing up the car to drive to one of the following: the Hospital for Sick Children, the Children's Hospital in London, the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, Kingston General Hospital or McMaster Children's Hospital. Their world has been turned upside down, and their child is hurting. We can't begin to imagine the raw emotions, self-doubts and uncertainties of parents whose child is affected by this life-threatening illness. In the words of my hero, Terry Fox, "Somewhere the hurting must stop."

The intention is that whether it's through members' statements or recognition by way of resolutions like mine, we take the time every September to recognize our children and youth and let them know that they are not alone, and that we will do better for them by standing united to conquer childhood cancer.

Consider the impact of it, just in Ontario. On any given day, 3,000 kids need cancer care in our province. Four hundred more children will be diagnosed with cancer this year. Two in three, or 65%, will suffer long-term effects, including infertility, heart disease, hearing loss and learning disabilities.

Children are most affected by leukemias (32%), central nervous system tumours (19%) and lymphomas (11%), kidneys, bones and muscles. The average child's age is five. One in five, or 20%, sadly, will die.

Yet it is estimated that only 3% of cancer research money is directed to childhood cancers, according to Childhood Cancer International.

As childhood cancer is the number one cause of disease-related death for children ages one to 14, the fight should not be fought alone. Across the entire world, from the United Arab Emirates to China, people are taking action to raise awareness of prevention and early detection of cancer. That is what the Gold Ribbon Campaign is about: to mobilize help for raising funds for family support, research and, most importantly, finding cures and saving our beloved children.

Last September, my constituent, cancer advocate and dad Neal Rourke, did just that when he, along with three young cancer survivors, rang the opening bell at the Toronto Stock Exchange in recognition of childhood cancer. Volunteers like Neal are reminding us that we need to do more so we can build a future free from cancer; that is, to build on the progress achieved, and to make new drug research possible so we can ensure a brighter and healthier future for all of our children. That means government, industry, hospitals, research institutes and individual and corporate donors—everyone—has to join the fight against childhood cancer.

My reason for introducing this resolution is also a personal one: It is in memory of Conah Higgins and Neal's son, Brendan Rourke, whose childhoods have been regrettably cut short. I stood in this House probably about a year and a half or so ago, Madam Speaker, and we celebrated, again, as a result of Neal's encouragement

and urging to recognize and wear gold ribbons in the House.

1340

Conah Higgins is a young man, the son of dear family friends from England. Conah was in the process of moving to Canada from the UK when he sadly passed away from cancer at the age of 17. He really didn't even know he had it. He started out with a little sore on his arm. By the time he got diagnosed, it was only about two or three months that he actually survived after that.

The other is in memory of Brendan Rourke, a young man from my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, and to recognize the tireless advocacy work of his father, Neal, who, in collaboration with an international network of parent groups and survivor networks, is raising funds, is raising awareness for young boys and girls whose childhoods have been regrettably cut short.

It was proud the day that, I believe, Neal was able to stand with those other survivors and ring the bell and light up the CN Tower. I know that Neal has got lots of plans. I've never seen someone so dedicated: the energy that he puts in, the conviction, the commitment. That, of course, is a legacy to his son, but also so that others don't have to suffer what he and his family have gone through.

Volunteers like Neal are reminding us that we need to do more so we can build a future free from cancer—to build, as I said earlier, on that progress achieved to make new drug research possible so we can ensure a brighter and healthier future for all of our children. It means all of us: government, industry, hospitals, research institutes, and individual and corporate donors—everyone has to join together to fight childhood cancer.

Madam Speaker, there are stories like what I have just shared with Conah and Brendan every day, sadly. I recommend that we recognize their extraordinary challenges and feats. They deserve to be honoured by having this resolution passed today so that every year in September we take the time to recognize the brave fight that these amazing children and their parents and their support circle of friends and family realize every day in their communities and in our communities.

While this is just really scratching the surface of what really needs to be done, it's nevertheless, I believe, an important commitment we need to make to our children. It's a symbol that we are here for them, that we will make the effort to find a cure, that we'll work tirelessly to ensure that we give them every opportunity to grow and thrive and live in a world that is free from cancer in all its forms.

In the end, it is my hope that we will soon, for the dream of my hero, Terry Fox, find a cure for all cancers. "Somewhere the hurting must stop."

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a privilege to rise on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin, and to commend the member for bringing this motion forward. We see eye to eye on this one.

I'm sure everybody in the House today hears the cries of parents out there on the lawn who are fighting for their children. That's a fight that they are taking on.

This is one that I believe all of us in this House can absolutely agree upon.

I want to take a little bit more of a positive note to tell you how this has affected my life and given me new friends. We all participate at the Relay For Life events that are going on in each and every one of our communities. There's one thing that I really want to specify and that I believe we all understand: Cancer does not discriminate. It takes away moms, dads, grandmas, grandpas, neighbours and kids. Sometimes we wonder, "What is He thinking, above there, by taking one of the most precious gifts that we have?" We often question that judgment, but I always say there is an angel who is needed up at the Pearly Gates, and that's why they are on their way.

I want to talk to you about a fine young little boy from Mindemoya. His name is Landen Harasym. He found me on Facebook and he called me and sent me a message. He said, "Would you mind coming to my mom's place of work? We're raising awareness for childhood cancer, and I'd like to paint your nails." So, of course, into my truck I go, and off I go to Manitoulin Island. I sit down and meet up with him. I had no idea they organized this. The media was there to take pictures, and it was just a fabulous afternoon of doing this. I met up with his beautiful little sister—her name is Hailee—his grandmother Marilyn and his mom, Marilee Harasym.

It was just a wonderful shop. They painted my nails in nice little yellows and blues and purples and bright greens. You know, nice fall colours. It was really, really pretty. If you ever want to get out of your comfort zone—and this is what awareness is all about: getting out of your comfort zone so that you can create awareness. Mind you, I have no problem getting out of my comfort zone. I actually look at opportunities to get out of my comfort zone to raise awareness for a vast number of issues that I believe in.

They painted my nails, and we had a wonderful afternoon. We had chit-chats and everything. That afternoon, I left Manitoulin Island and went to meet up with the cattlemen's association. That afternoon was the first time I met up with the cattlemen's association. Mind you, it was the first time they met up with their local member of Parliament that afternoon, as well, and when I extended my hand to shake hands with them, they went, "Whoa, look at his painted nails." They took a step back and were wondering, "What the heck are we getting involved with? This is our member?"

I explained the situation and everybody just goes, "Oh, yes, that's right. Good on you. Good on you for doing that." So I left that event after a bunch of chuckles, and I'm leaving Manitoulin Island with my wife. Madam Speaker, I was going too fast. My wife and I were in a heated exchange at the moment, and one of our finest from the province pulls me over. I'm not making this up. You can't make this story up. This happened. It was actually in one of my columns in my riding.

The police officer pulls me over, comes over to my window, and I can see in the rear-view mirror that he is not impressed. He comes over, I roll down my window and I turn around and look at him, and say, "You know, I have no explanation. I'm sorry. You got me. I was going too fast." "Driver's licence and registration."

I reach into my glove compartment and pull them out. He does, "What the heck?" He sees my nails that are painted, and he questions me. He says—he looks at that, and I say, "Do you want an explanation?" And he goes, "No." I said, "Well, you're going to get it anyway." So I give him the explanation as to what I was doing. He hands me back my slip and tells me, "Now I understand, Mr. Mantha. You're rushing home to finish buffing your nails. Slow down. Have a nice day."

Now, the story doesn't end there, because I turned around the next day and made an extra donation because of the speeding ticket I got out of, the extra charge, because I was going to get charged a hefty amount that day. I called Landen and I said, "Thank you very much for what you did for me by painting my nails. You basically saved my wallet."

Developing that relationship with him—he often comes back, and I want to let everyone know that Landen has been in remission from the cancer that he had gone through for, I believe, six or seven years now. He often comes up to my condo. Each and every one of us who has a condo here—I live close to the hospital, so I offer my apartment to each and every person across my riding who is in financial difficulties because it's just a skip and a hop for them. Plus, it gives me company. Sometimes, when a mom or a grandpa or even a dad comes over, I get to have a free supper and company when I go home. It's always nice to have them.

Those are some of the stories that I have. These kids love to come up. They walk down Yonge Street, go up Bay Street, go down to the aquarium. Each and every one of us has that opportunity to open up our hearts and give our homes to them. I would encourage you all to do it, and I want to commend the member for bringing this forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Burlington.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: What a privilege to stand in the House today and follow the member opposite in that wonderful story. I hope I can match its personality and passion. I want to salute the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for tabling this conversation today and for his passion, too. I had a chance to listen to your remarks. It's really touching and it's one of the great things about private members' time, when we get to hear from all members of the House about how, sometimes, they come into public life with their personal experiences and what got them here. It's clear for everyone here today that your passion was really put in front of us today, and we salute you for that. I love that you talked about Terry Fox. I'm going to talk about him in a second.

What a pleasure to talk about something that touches us all and is so important. It's often said—and it seems

trite but it's true—that cancer is a disease that touches us all. I'm sure every single member of this House has lost a family member, a friend or neighbour, and among them are children who have died of cancer. I have friends who are in that boat. I don't have children myself but I have friends who have children and who have lost children to cancer.

1350

I remember very vividly friends of mine whose daughter died of cancer at a young age. We all took turns staying with her at SickKids while she went through her course of treatment. I'm proud to say that I was part of that village that helped them and her. While she didn't survive that horrible disease, it was a privilege to be with that family and with her on her very difficult journey.

We have much to do when it comes to looking after our children who are diagnosed with cancer, because they are forced to grow up far too quickly. We know that these little angels, some of whom have gone to heaven, have really touched us all. We see in their spirit the impacts of the disease that they've had to face and the challenges that they've had: the endless medical treatments that they have to go through and the appointments. These are times when they should be learning, enjoying, playing and growing up, and instead, unfortunately, they're in the grips of this horrible disease.

The good news, of course, is that some of them do survive. While Ontario is a leader in cancer care, and while our survival rates are amongst the highest in the world, as has been noted already, we need to and must focus—particularly when it comes to our children—on better outcomes.

We understand that cancer care is an important example of how investments are being made. I think it's worth noting that our government has increased funding to Cancer Care Ontario from \$333 million in 2003 to over \$1.8 billion in 2014-15. That is an important number, Speaker, because it speaks to the growing challenges with cancer.

Children battling cancer have unique needs, and they need a support system. Thankfully, we have that system. I think it's again important to note that it takes a village. What we have here in Ontario is the Pediatric Oncology Group of Ontario, or POGO, which plans, supports and seeks treatment, and is part of the framework of treatment for children. That system includes a provincial registry, a networked information system and evidence-based clinical practice guidelines.

These things are very important, again. They're part of the infrastructure for treatment. This system is designed to monitor the incidence and prevalence of childhood cancers, the demand for care and the workload of pediatric oncology programs, patient outcomes and the long-term effects of childhood cancer, all of which, again, are part of the larger issue. I'm proud to say that our government gave POGO, the Pediatric Oncology Group of Ontario, \$6.3 million in base funding this year.

While we're making inroads, and while our cancer system has improved significantly in the past years—we

can say that we measure more, we know more and we report more—we're working towards increased accountability and continued improvement, because children in Ontario can and need to receive the best care that there is to offer.

Again, I want to salute the member opposite for allowing us to have this conversation today. This has touched us all. Continued advocacy on behalf of children facing a battle with cancer: There probably isn't a much more important topic that we could be discussing, and so I'm pleased to take part in it.

By shining a light on this issue and encouraging Ontarians across the province to join in the fight against childhood cancers, we can help to ensure that all children have that opportunity to be kids, and to become the leaders of our province and of our future that we know that they can be.

Thanks so much, Speaker, for this opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Of course, I'm very pleased to rise today and to speak on behalf of my colleague the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and his motion. It's a resolution to call on the government to proclaim the month of September of each year as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month in Ontario, to recognize the gold ribbon as the awareness symbol of childhood cancer, and to strongly encourage all citizens to join in the fight against childhood cancer.

A lot of what we do sometimes is to really be the cheerleaders for so many activists in our ridings, in other neighbouring ridings and all across Ontario, and to encourage them, because we know that the government can't take care of everybody, can't take care of everything, and can't even fund everything. So we need those people out there who have a passion in their heart, get involved and either create organizations to offer different types of support or just fundraise for support or research.

I'm really pleased, when we do have these commemorative ribbons and pins that we wear and we promote things, that we use our social media accounts not just to promote ourselves, not just to promote our side of the House in partisan politics, but we use them to promote all the great people across Ontario who want to fight for a better quality of life for everybody.

I think that that is what's really the focus: to do the best that we can do for the children of Ontario. We know we can't wave that magic wand and make everything perfect and make all childhood cancer disappear, but we can certainly do more to raise awareness and to help in the prevention and to help in the treatment.

When we hear news reports about parents whose children have meningitis and they don't understand that there is science behind the treatments, that there are specialists—we have fantastic doctors in Ontario, but if the child is not brought by the parents and the child can't express that, "I want to see a doctor or a specialist or travel to Toronto to SickKids Hospital"—the child can't fight for themselves, so it's really our job to fight for the

kids and to help the people who are there to fight for the kids.

I knew a woman—just somebody I worked out with at the gym—and she had two identical twin boys, four years old. One had leukemia and passed away and the other one was not ill and didn't. I think about it a lot, because here you have living proof: a twin who doesn't have his identical twin brother.

I want to bring up one issue sometimes with childhood cancers. My son actually had his thyroid removed—it was a malignant tumour—when he was 11 and a half. He was the oldest of four kids, so you can imagine the struggle that was, when you have three younger kids at home and you don't want them to know everything that's going on. He was 11 and a half years old. He was too old to be at SickKids but not quite old enough to be at Mount Sinai, which is the centre for thyroid cancer in Canada. Very few children have thyroid cancer, not because they can't have it but because it grows very slowly and it's not detected that young. A friend of mine is a pediatrician and it was caught very early and he got treatment very early. We were very fortunate that Mount Sinai Hospital agreed to take him on as a pretend 12-year-old, and he was followed from then on.

He's now starting his cardiology training. He has finished internal medicine and he will be taking care of many patients in Canada. So what goes around comes around. When we save a child's life, that child could go on to do fantastic things.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak, of course, in favour of the motion put forward by the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. It is a sad reality that so many of our young people suffer from cancer. There are about 10,000 children living with cancer in Canada today. Each year, about 1,500 new cases are diagnosed.

Childhood cancer is unique. It's not just a subset of adult cancer; it has its own specific biology and treatment and effects of treatment. On the one hand, adults are most affected by breast, lung, prostate, bowel and bladder cancers. Children, meanwhile, are most affected by leukemia and by tumours of the brain, nervous system, lymphatic system, kidney, bones and muscles. Leukemia is the most commonly diagnosed of these, comprising some 30% of the total new cases diagnosed each year. Acute lymphoblastic leukemia, or ALL, is the most common form and comprises about 75% of these cases, with peak incidence at two to three years of age.

For adulthood cancers, causes can often be traced back to lifestyle, things like the environment, diet, alcohol, smoking—and I'm sure politics plays a role in there as well. But children's cancers usually aren't explainable, especially to a child. With the causes in most cases unknown, it presents that much more of a challenge to mitigate and to treat. The same treatments are often used for children. Just as with adults, they too undergo chemotherapy, radiation and surgery, but the difference is

how they experience these treatments. Children are more likely to have significant side effects like cognitive dysfunction, cataracts or even organ failure. The reality is that these harsh treatments are extremely tough on children's young and developing bodies. A major difference between the two, though, is that children have an overall cure rate of 80%, much higher than the 50% range for adults.

Even as cancer survivors, because of the process of treatment, many of these children will continue to experience health challenges throughout their lives. The health effects go beyond just what happens to their bodies. Cancer and all that is involved with treating it can prompt psychological and emotional issues for children long after a diagnosis or a cure. Their families, too, are wrapped up in the treatment of childhood cancer. They are such crucial supports to these young patients and, in so doing, often have to make tremendous sacrifices.

1400

Parents and other family members can also be affected both emotionally and in other ways. Some common family concerns during treatment include, of course, financial stresses—the member from Algoma–Manitoulin mentioned this—travelling to and staying near the cancer centre, the possible loss of a job and the need for home schooling. Cancer is really not limited to just the one person who suffers; its impact goes far beyond that.

There's no doubt that we've come a long way in terms of treating cancer for children and for adults. The survival rate is about 80%, and has risen from 46% since the 1960s. But there is so much more that can be done, which is why raising awareness about childhood cancer is such an important goal. Childhood cancer is still responsible for more deaths of children and adolescents in Canada than any other disease: more than asthma, diabetes, cystic fibrosis and AIDS combined. Canada loses tens of thousands of years of potential life each year to childhood cancer, and the impact of improvements in treatment and survival for childhood cancer could have a profound effect on our country, our province and our communities.

Take, for example, the story of Laura Hillier, a teen in Burlington who recently lost her life from a rare form of cancer. Even at one of the province's top cancer treatment centres, Juravinski Hospital in Hamilton, she wasn't able to get the treatment she needed in time.

I just want to say a few words about Laura, if I can get through this. She made a promise to her mother. She became an advocate for childhood cancer and for access to appropriate treatment throughout her journey. She made her mother promise that her mother would carry on this important cause. "She's left an important mark," said a doctor at Juravinski Hospital. "Laura and her mom really did the province and across the country a service in highlighting what they've gone through and the importance of the issue. It's had an effect at multiple levels."

Her mom said, "She lived her life to help others. There was no half measure for her. If she was going to do something, she was going to give it everything she had." That's what we should do as well, not only to honour the

life of Laura Hillier, but also to make sure that no other family in the province of Ontario has to go through what she did. Her mother finally said that she showed “incredible determination and resilience” throughout her battles with cancer.

I'll be thinking of Laura and the other children in the province of Ontario when I walk in the Relay for Life at WCI on Friday. I commend the member for bringing this forward. It is important. This is a shared cause that we all have. It's a shared responsibility we all have. Laura made a difference; and this government listened on two issues that Laura was particularly concerned about. This is the place to get things done and to work together to improve the health of all Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Halton.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the private member's motion put forward by my colleague MPP Walker. I am proud to support this motion to proclaim the month of September as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month in Ontario.

While the causes of pediatric cancer are still largely unknown by us, this heartbreaking disease continues to scar and wound families all over the world. This month will allow us to take a moment to remember and think about the lives lost and those who are still fighting this devastating disease, and to stand together with the families who are facing this terrible disease. It's about dedicating ourselves together to fighting this disease together.

I'm sure that everyone here who has a child or grandchild, or a friend or neighbour, can sympathize with any family coping with childhood cancer. No one wants to see a child suffer, ever, and certainly not from a disease as scary or as devastating as cancer.

I have two children of my own, and I cannot even begin to imagine what it must be like to watch your child undergo cancer treatment. I have, however, watched a young girl in our local community, at our local school, struggle with cancer. It was a moving experience and one that I really walked away from feeling completely at a loss to understand how this could happen to a child. The good news is that she was courageous, and she is a cancer survivor.

I'm proud to say that Ontario is a leader in cancer care in Canada and around the world. This year, the Cancer Quality Council of Ontario revealed that our province's cancer survival rates are among the highest worldwide, and I know our government is working hard to push those rates even higher. We have increased funding to Cancer Care Ontario from \$333.8 million in 2003-04 to \$1.8 billion in 2014-15. We've also increased funding for stem cell transplants by more than 600%—600%—in recent years.

But, of course, we know that too many Ontarians are diagnosed with cancer every year, and we could still do more. That's why I encourage all of my colleagues here in the House today to support this motion to declare September Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. This is

just one more way that all of us can work together to help protect our most beloved and our most vulnerable: our children.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from York-Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to rise today and speak in support of the recognition of the month of September as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

I want to congratulate my colleague the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound in bringing it to our attention today as something that deserves the recommendation and the support that making September Childhood Cancer Awareness Month each year in Ontario would do to encourage all citizens to make themselves more familiar with this most unfortunate concern of childhood cancer.

I think that, in today's world, there is no one who hasn't been touched by cancer, whether it's themselves, their family, their friends and neighbours. In my case, the childhood cancer story was very meaningful, because it was across the street from where I live: A seven-month-old baby who was still nursing was diagnosed with leukemia. It had the entire neighbourhood just torn between being frozen in horror and anxious to help where possible. It certainly demonstrates that while cancer may be something that is a terrible thing to go through, at the same time, it brings out the best in everyone around you.

This was a family with four children and a dairy farm. To see the way in which people slipped in to provide meals, take over the management of a dairy herd, get the baby and mother, on a regular basis, down to Sick Children's—and, of course, the baby was there for a long time, in and out for seven months. At the same time as this family was dealing with leukemia with a baby, so was someone else who came into the same unit. It just made it very difficult, because the other one didn't survive.

But the baby who was my neighbour—it was very difficult, as you can imagine, to have a seven-month-old to be able to communicate and be able to explain anything that was happening and so forth. But one message that the baby was able to make was when he had been there for a while and had the experience of all the specialists coming in. When he saw them, he'd say, “Bye-bye.” He knew that it would be better when they were gone. But he fought a tough battle. I have to tell you that, last year, in a grade 5 class, he came up to me and he said, “Mrs. Munro, I'm your neighbour from across the road.” It was a real thrill to see someone who, by the way, is taller than I, but the picture of health and such a success story.

As we know, all too many are diagnosed and either lose their battle with cancer or are unable to enjoy good health in the years following diagnosis. Cases like this are, of course, tragic for the family and leave an impact on the community.

1410

But we can look at some initiatives like Camp Ooch, which provides an opportunity for children who have

been challenged. It's a camp in Muskoka, and it serves the Toronto-area hospitals.

So there are things that we can look at as demonstrations of where we have been successful in providing some opportunity for families.

We need to stand united to conquer this disease, and we need to have the goal-driven campaign to help shine a light on the types of cancer that affect children in our communities.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's a great honour to stand here and speak to the motion from the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. As he acknowledges, this is a very personal type of motion, a motion that touches so many hearts across the province, so many hearts in this Legislature, and I am, of course, no exception.

I want to start to talk a bit about how important it is to raise awareness in declaring a month—raising awareness so we can provide greater research, greater support to the families when they're supporting a child who has cancer.

We had a very unprecedented gift happen at my local community hospital, Toronto East General Hospital. A local family donated \$50 million to the hospital in memory of their son Michael, who died of cancer. Berna and Myron Garron made tremendous amounts of money in manufacturing. Their son was diagnosed at seven years old, had over five years of extensive treatments, and eventually he succumbed at 13. He was lying on his deathbed, and he said to his mother, "I'm so worried that I will be forgotten." His mother said, "Don't worry. We will never forget you." They put up \$50 million in his memory, and in his honour we've renamed the Toronto East General Hospital the Michael Garron Hospital, as part of the Toronto East Health Network.

As we dropped the veil on that renaming, I was struck by how powerfully I felt the loss of not their son, who I didn't know, but of my brother Bruce Thomas Aidan Potts, who died in a car accident—actually, he was in a coma for 10 years before he succumbed—and of my nephew Jason Gareth Thomas Potts, who was diagnosed with brain cancer at about three and died at 12. He went through incredible treatments, and he was such an incredible spirit. I recognize how sometimes cancer affects families in broader ways than just the cancer. His older brother, so depressed when the cancer came back for the third time, died of self-inflicted wounds. I remember my nephew on his sickbed, saying, "Why did my brother take his life? I told him—doesn't he know?—it always gets better." Those were the near-dying words of my nephew as he was remembering his brother.

I'm so delighted that you brought this piece forward, because bringing greater awareness in September to remember the lives of our young ones is what I was thinking about as we revealed that flag. It's not just about their son; it's about us all remembering those who died young in our lives.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further questions and comments? The member from Ajax-Pickering.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Ajax-Pickering, continuing that time. I acknowledge and thank the member across the floor from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. It's a great effort he has put forward. And I thank my colleague MPP Potts for giving me a minute and a half at the end. I just wanted to mention a couple of quick things.

In this House, there is a plethora of people who contribute to those people who need help. Virtually everyone here falls in that category, and they do a great job, as does the presenter today.

I was just looking at—because it is childhood cancer—a note from Childhood Cancer Canada in reference to the 23rd annual charity golf tournament that my family runs. We have thanks from them for helping to support the 10,000 kids and their families across Canada who are bravely battling cancer. We feel very humbled and very proud to be part of that—my wife, Donna, Monica Hickey, Ray Hickey. Throughout that whole process we contribute to 20 charities. It is a charitable tournament, but the one that hurts you the most in the heart is when children are involved.

I just have to tell you, I'm very proud to stand with the rest of you today and speak in favour of this. I acknowledge very much the original presenter.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member for Whitby-Oshawa.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'd like to thank the hard-working member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for bringing forward this important resolution.

As we've heard quite eloquently from other members of the Legislature, all of us in this Legislature know someone whose life has been affected by cancer, Speaker. When it's a child whose battle it becomes, the impact is even more devastating.

There's no question that in the past few decades we've made great leaps in detecting and treating this terrible disease, yet even with those advancements, the journey towards eradicating cancer forever is not over.

Near my riding of Whitby-Oshawa, the R.S. McLaughlin Durham Regional Cancer Centre serves over 100,000 families in and around Durham region. I say "families" because when a loved one suffers from this disease, it's a stressful time for the whole family. In the case of youth dealing with life after treatment, these types of centres offer dedicated service from medical professionals to help patients and families.

However, even when a patient's days are darkest, there's hope, Speaker; there's hope. We see this in the way our communities come together in the face of these challenges; for example, with the Terry Fox Run, which is upcoming in September.

While childhood cancer is not a new issue, in this Legislature we have a unique opportunity this afternoon, Speaker, to bring support to those children who are suffering and the families that are supporting them by putting a spotlight on this issue.

No child should ever have to face cancer alone, should they? By proclaiming the month of September as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, we will continue to

encourage our communities to aid in the fight against this dreadful disease. I spoke earlier about the Terry Fox Run, which will be run in 2016 for the 36th consecutive year. It's long been a symbol of hope and a chance for individuals and communities across our great province to come together to raise funds and continue to fight against cancer.

Unfortunately, cancer stands as the number one cause of disease-related death for children under the age of 14. Tragically, one in five of these children will die and two in three will suffer long-term effects as a consequence of dealing with this disease in their youth.

I'm encouraged, Speaker, by the universal agreement that I hear from members of the Legislature on this important resolution. Going forward, we have an opportunity again this afternoon to ensure that no child should ever have to face cancer alone, and we will be able to encourage our communities particularly in fighting against this dreadful disease.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to return to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound to wrap up.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. As I had mentioned to you before, I'd like to correct my record. I believe in my emotional state I said that Neal actually rang the bells at the CN Tower and also the Toronto Stock Exchange. I know he was wanting to do that, and I can tell you if he had his way he'd light up every light in Toronto and across the province. And that may just come in the future.

I'd like to thank my colleagues for all of your personal stories: the members from Algoma–Manitoulin, Kitchener–Waterloo, Burlington, Halton, Beaches–East York, Ajax–Pickering, Thornhill, Whitby–Oshawa and York–Simcoe. Our health critic, Jeff Yurek, from Elgin–Middlesex–London also wanted to speak, but we just couldn't fit him in. But he's a big, big proponent.

I want to thank all of the staff, all the volunteers, the donors, the doctors, nurses—every single health care practitioner that is out there—and especially the volunteers who help along the way to try to help the families in their time of need.

We all need a spirit of hope, we all need something to grab on to. Again, I want to acknowledge the efforts of Neal Rourke, particularly, and all of the people that I mentioned today. I'm not going to go through the list of names again, but thank you so much for all that you do.

This truly is my way of being part of the legacy. On behalf of Neal and Rosanne Rourke and their son Brendan, and of Conah Higgins, his mom Dawn, his dad David, and his little sister Tyler “Tilley” Higgin, you truly are not allowing them to go without serving and helping others. It's a legacy that you should be proud of. It's a legacy that everyone in this House should be proud of—to help. Cancer can be beaten. As my hero Terry Fox said, it must stop somewhere. It will be beaten.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We'll deal with the vote on this motion a little bit later.

1420

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT
ACT (NUMBER PLATES
AND CARRYING RACKS), 2016
LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LE CODE
DE LA ROUTE (PLAQUES
D'IMMATRICULATION ET SUPPORTS
DE TRANSPORT)

Mr. Norm Miller moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 191, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to number plates and carrying racks / Projet de loi 191, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui a trait aux plaques d'immatriculation et aux supports de transport.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd like to begin by welcoming some constituents from Parry Sound–Muskoka to the Legislature: Stephen Cairns and his wife, Carol Cairns, and friend Mike Forth are here in the members' gallery today.

Stephen and his wife, last year, were driving to Niagara-on-the-Lake with their bicycle rack mounted on the back of their vehicle, looking forward to enjoying some cycling in the beautiful area of our province. They got onto the 407, and a friendly OPP officer pulled them over for having a rack obscuring the licence plate on the back of their vehicle, which happens to be against the law in the province of Ontario. They did have a transponder on board, so they weren't trying to avoid the fee for using the 407, and they did explain that to the OPP officer, but they were charged anyway. So I have that one incident, and I'll come back to that, hopefully, if have time.

A few years back, I had Ian Dawes from Ecclestone Cycle, who, incidentally, is the son-in-law of the Minister of Education here in the province of Ontario and has a cycle shop in Bracebridge. He called my constituency office saying that he'd had some customers who had been stopped by police for having bicycle racks obscuring their licence plate.

Sylvia Jones wrote to the minister and copied me, saying—this is her letter:

“I have received several inquiries from Dufferin–Caledon drivers who have received tickets because a bicycle rack was obstructing the rear licence plate.

“Rear-mounted bicycle racks are a popular item for bicycle enthusiasts because of ease of installation and use. Many Ontarians who want to transport their bikes to and from trails and paths cannot easily lift their bicycle to a roof-mounted rack. The availability of rear-mounted bicycle racks leads sellers and purchasers to believe they are 100% allowable.”

She goes on to say: “Minister, the province is promoting and encouraging active living, but the rules sur-

rounding transportation [are] causing confusion. I believe the legislation needs to be clarified to ensure cyclists can safely and legally transport their bicycles throughout the province.”

Surprise, surprise: I agree with her letter. That’s why I have brought forward this legislation, co-sponsored by the member from Burlington, to allow for regulations to provide an exemption for rear-mounted bicycle racks.

I might note that other jurisdictions do allow for exemptions. For example, the state of Utah allows, “Licence plates may be reasonably obscured by a trailer hitch, a wheelchair lift or wheelchair carrier, a trailer being towed by the vehicle, a bicycle rack, ski rack, or luggage rack, or a similar cargo-carrying device.” There are many other jurisdictions that do allow for this.

I wanted to go on and mention that in the case of my constituent, he and his wife pointed out that they purchased their bicycle rack at Canadian Tire. They’re sold all over the place, and thousands of people have these racks. In fact, I have one myself, and I’ve done the same trip they talked about, going with my wife to Niagara-on-the-Lake. We did a similar trip to Prince Edward county, completely unaware that we were breaking the law. Thousands of people do that. When you buy it at Canadian Tire, it doesn’t have a big sign on it saying, “This may be illegal when you put it on your vehicle.” You have to buy it, get it home, open it and read the owner’s manual, and there in fine print it says, “In some jurisdictions this might not be legal.” I don’t think that’s very fair to the consumer. It’s my feeling that when you have a law that many people are inadvertently breaking without realizing they’re breaking the law, it’s a law that really should be changed. That’s what this private member’s bill is about.

Madam Speaker, I guess I’d just like to come back to the Cairns case and mention that in their case, they didn’t know they were breaking the law. They got pulled over, they got charged, and then they had to go to court. They had to come from Muskoka, first of all, for one trip down just to let them know they were going to fight the case, and then another day back down to Vaughan to go to court over the case. Then, when they got to court, they basically won the case in part because of the fact that it was obvious they weren’t trying to avoid paying the fee to go on the 407—but also when they produced pictures of OPP vehicles with similar racks mounted on the backs of their vehicles being used around the province.

I just think this makes sense, to make a change that will make it legal to have rear-mounted bicycle racks, and other racks; it’s not just limited to bicycle racks. It would also allow for wheelchair and luggage racks in the province of Ontario. As the member from Burlington will agree, I’m sure, we’re trying to promote healthy living. We’re trying to promote safe cycling and we’re trying to make it easy for people to be able to use their bicycles. This is one small way of being able to do that.

Because this is co-sponsored by the member from Burlington, I will now hand it over to the member from Burlington to use the next six minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Burlington.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I’m absolutely delighted to join the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka in this important conversation, and to thank him for asking me to join him in it and in co-sponsoring the bill. I want to welcome his constituents here. I’m pleased to see you. Thank you for making the trip; it’s important to have you here.

Madam Speaker, as the member opposite mentioned, this is an important issue, an important conversation. Sometimes, some of the issues that we raise here in private members’ time are personal to us all. I know and I will speak to the member opposite’s commitment to cycling, and my own. This is something that is well worth discussing, so I’m proud to be here.

That said, issues related to cycling in Ontario, as I mentioned, are close to my heart. Road safety and the safety of cyclists across the province are important issues for me. But this issue isn’t entirely about cycling in a way, because rear racks on cars can carry all kinds of things: skis, surfboards or sometimes even wheelchairs and mobility devices.

But it does underscore an important fact, and that’s that people who do choose to cycle in our province, whether they’re doing so as a means of daily transportation, cycling tourism, recreation—as the member opposite mentioned, there are so many benefits to cycling. It’s important and timely that we have this conversation today, because our government is encouraging Ontarians to cycle even more and investing heavily in cycling infrastructure, changes to the Highway Traffic Act and cycling-related programs. Again, it’s an important debate and a timely one.

The safety of our roads and those who use them is always the highest priority for our government. As members well know, we have the safest roads in North America, and we’re proud of that.

My history as a cycling advocate is known to the members of this House, Speaker. It’s a robust one. It’s twinned with my commitment to road safety. Why? Because prior to my election, of course, in 2014, my commitment to cycling advocacy was promoted by a personal loss when my spouse, OPP Sergeant Greg Stobbart, was killed in a cycling tragedy.

Again, as someone who was married to a police officer, I shared his passion for cycling, but I also shared his commitment to and passion for road safety, because he spent close to 25 years as a police officer. As the member opposite must know, because his spouse is also an officer, when you live with a police officer, these issues touch you in an even more profound way.

We want to encourage people to cycle and cycle even more. As the member opposite mentioned, we want to help people discover the benefits of getting on their bikes, and safety is paramount to us, of course.

We know that cycling is growing. Almost three million Ontarians choose to ride their bikes at least once a week; 32% of them ride their bikes at least monthly, and

of those, 4% say they ride a bike daily, with an additional 28% riding weekly. Almost 600,000 people in this province are riding their bikes every day, and that's critically important.

1430

Cycling tourism is also an important conversation that we're having in Ontario. Why? Because we look to Quebec, which has invested over \$200 million in the Route verte. It brings them \$134 million in return on that investment. Ontario wants to realize some of those revenues, and we want our people to be cycling.

We know, too, that just south of us, in the United States, they have a 50,000-mile bike route that they're planning and investing in. Cycling adds an astounding \$49 billion to the US economy.

As part of our government's #CycleON strategy, released in 2013, my colleague the MPP for Cambridge and PA to the Minister of Transportation recently announced the recipients of the Ontario Municipal Cycling Infrastructure Program and the Cycling Training Fund, two new programs designed to promote cycling and cycling safety in our province. There were over 100 municipalities—150, actually—that applied to that fund. It was a \$10-million fund. This is good news, and evidence of the pent-up demand that cycling is in our province.

The other issue that comes to mind in this debate today is education and awareness. I remember talking to the member opposite about that, too. Why? Because Ontarians who choose to carry their bicycle, their luggage or any other equipment on the back of their vehicle are likely unaware that they are in contravention of the act; they don't know that their plates were not visible. I think that's an important thing to mention, because opportunities like this debate carry the inherent possibility to educate Ontarians, but also the debate going forward, which today's discussion is going to initiate, provides us with that ongoing opportunity to really decide how we're going to fix this situation and how we're going to bring the issue to the minds of Ontarians that this is very important for them to know.

What does this tell us? It tells us that we need a solution, and that a solution is worth exploring. On the face of it, I know and I understand that allowing an exemption, which is one option, might seem like a straightforward solution. But it's worth noting that, in doing so, there might be unintended consequences. So I'm a little bit torn, because I want this issue to be explored; I want us to find a solution. Again, I think that, moving forward, a broader consultation is necessary; perhaps a discussion at committee, which I would absolutely welcome.

As I mentioned earlier, I'm aware of the issues and dangers of road safety and enforcement because of my late husband. We know, too, that it's important for front and rear licence plates to be visible. Again, how do we engineer that? How do we make it happen? Of course, the member opposite mentioned the 407. The people here today experience that. There are red light cameras. The

Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police has done a presentation to the government on this issue and reminded us that we need to find solutions.

But we also understand that, at its core, the intention of this bill is to promote cycling in Ontario, and again, I heartily embrace that.

As I was preparing for today's discussion, I found some really interesting opportunities online for in-vehicle technologies that exist in Europe. I think those are worth exploring. We should talk to vehicle manufacturers and cycling equipment manufacturers.

I look forward to that robust debate, and I want to thank the member opposite again for asking me to join him and for his cycling advocacy in his riding and beyond.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to say a few words with regard to Norm Miller's—the Parry Sound—Muskoka member's—Bill 191 on cycling. I think it's a great opportunity to show the people of Ontario that when good ideas come forward, we can all get behind the piece of legislation and share that, and ensure that safety becomes paramount.

This bill seems like a pretty good piece of common sense legislation in the fact that people need to transport their bikes to certain areas in order to participate in cycling, and a hindrance, obviously, is the fact that these racks to mount bikes on the back are obscuring their licence plates and, at the end of the day, they could have a ticket.

I think this is an easy solution, and I hope the government ensures that this bill gets through committee and back for third reading as soon as possible. I'm hoping that we can have this bill legislated before we break in the second week of June. We have lots of time, and I think this bill should become a priority.

I think that the cycling strategy is important, and I commend the government for pushing forward with improving cycling. However, my riding was unsuccessful with the grants that were given out, and there are a lot of upset cyclists in my area, because St. Thomas and Elgin county are pretty rural and the roads were never really built to put cyclists on, and they're so important to the people who like to cycle every day, to get out and ride, but they want to be safe.

Elgin county has created a cycle path or bike lane on Highway 4 at Sunset Drive over the last few years. I think that's great. They're connecting Port Bruce to Port Stanley with widened roads to make it safer, but there are quite a few areas in our area where people like to ride but they aren't able to do so safely; they do so at their own risk. I've seen some of the drivers in our area, and I don't cycle on the roads mainly because of that.

Being lighthearted aside, though, in rural Ontario, to get to our trails, sometimes you have to put your bikes on a rack to get to the area you want to go to. The fact that

you can get a fine in order to get your bikes—if you can't fit them in the back of your truck. I have a pick-up truck so I throw the bikes in the back of the truck when I need to go somewhere. However, not everybody has that choice, and it might hinder them from riding.

My daughter and I like to go for rides in the area. However, the roads we live around—we choose to go on the sidewalk. Again, we could probably get a fine for doing that in our area too, but I'd rather risk that fine than the fact we put ourselves in danger.

I know that the member from Cambridge has offered to look at the next proposal that my area puts in for the next amount of grants, if they still have them. We're going to take her up on that. We need to have that money for our area because we don't have a huge tax base. We've lost a lot of manufacturing. We won't say it was caused by this government—but at least they're coming back with some cycling infrastructure money. We'd like to get some share of that in order to improve it.

I also, at this time, just want to give a call-out to the cycling shops in my area because sometimes people in my riding don't know where to go. My grandfather came from Poland in the late 1920s. He was known as Pop to the neighbourhood. What he would do is fix everyone's bike, growing up, and he built the first two bikes that I rode. He became known as Pop. I called him Pop; everyone called him Pop in the city, because he fixed bikes. But nowadays we don't have that many Pops in the area to fix bikes.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's because of the College of Trades.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: The College of Trades may have been a cause of that; thanks, Mr. Hudak.

Anyway, we have Paul's Bicycle Repair and Sports Exchange on Ross Street. It's an old-fashioned bike shop; you can go in there and talk to Paul. He always has his blue smock on, ready to make repairs. We have the hi-tech Trek shop. Trek has opened up in the northern part of my riding, in south London.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Nice.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Nice shop; I've been in there checking it out.

I have Mountain Equipment Co-op in my area, which has a lot of bike programs they've put together. However, it is moving out of my riding, a little further north. It will probably be in the member from London-Fanshawe's riding come September, when they have their new building.

I just want to say: Let's pass this bill really quickly. It makes sense to remove any barrier we can to ensure that people have access to cycling.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to tell the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London that if there is money to be dished out, there's a lot of room for it in Algoma-Manitoulin. I just want to say that.

I just noticed in the crowd with us a very good friend of mine. I spent a very pleasant evening a couple of days

ago having supper with him, reminiscing over a few discussions and talking about stuff. I want to introduce Stew Kiff to the House today. Welcome, Stew Kiff. I'm glad you're joining us.

Again, I want to commend the member from—where are you, my friend?

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes, Parry Sound-Muskoka. He brings a very important piece of legislation forward when it comes to actually looking at developing tourism and attracting economic development to many areas. The cycling communities are growing at a very fast pace throughout Ontario. They are also growing at a very fast pace in northern Ontario; both winter and summer enthusiasts are out there cycling regularly.

I've been newly minted as the co-chair for the all-party cycling caucus, and I work very closely with my friends—and I can say “my friends”—Eleanor and Norm when we're talking about strategies for the cycling community. It was great that all three of us, along with our critics—we were all at the Ontario Bike Summit, where I was enlightened on a lot of information that was there.

1440

It was at that point in time that I informed everybody at the summit that I had decided to make some serious health-changing decisions. I'm glad that the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton is here, because he actually recorded a promise that I had made when I was out at the bike summit. I hadn't been on a bike in, oh, I would say 20-plus years; it had been a long time. By the end of that evening, I told the delegates that were there that I would get out, get on a bike, ring a bell and do a little bit of pedalling. I did go out, the member did record me and it was a fantastic ride that I did take down on Yonge Street here in Toronto.

I want to put a shout-out for the group MICA out of Manitoulin Island, the Manitoulin Island Cycling Advocates. They are going to be having the Manitoulin Island cycling passage, which is going to be held on June 4 and 5, I believe, of this summer. There are a vast amount of individuals that come from southern Ontario, who jump on the Chi-Cheemaun and come and enjoy the cycling routes that are there on Manitoulin Island. We receive them wholeheartedly each and every summer and have a wonderful time hosting them at the vast bed and breakfasts and hotels that we have on Manitoulin Island.

Which brings me to talk about what the member is bringing forward. Basically, we think, from where I stand, it is actual common sense. If you look at a bike rack, what's the difference between a bike rack or a Ski-Doo trailer? You're still not looking at the plate. It makes sense that you're going to have your Ski-Doos on your trailer, but you can't see the plate that is being covered, because most of the time it's covered with snow. The bike rack is just making good sense. Again, it's promoting good, healthy options as far as what is needed in many of our communities across this province.

I want to put a shout-out to Maja from MICA, from Manitoulin Island, who has been working very hard on

behalf of the group in order to establish another thing that we think is a possibility. We put the petition forward to the Minister of Transportation, as far as looking at this as a pilot project. What we'd like to use, in order to bring more cycling enthusiasts, not only to Manitoulin Island but across the province, are the existing signs that are on the cycling routes across Manitoulin Island. Why? It gives an opportunity to the cycling communities to know exactly where they're going, because individuals that are coming to those areas sometimes get off-course. Having the pilot project so that we can establish it there, to see if it actually works and helps the cycling community to get to and from their destination, I think would be a very positive step forward, such as the common sense that we have with this particular piece of legislation. It would be a very welcome issue going forward.

There's the other thing that we also are always diligent on, and it is making sure that when we are working on infrastructure we have those paved shoulders. I've been working with the minister, and his assistant as well, to make sure that in upcoming projects, if the opportunity is there, we make sure that those paved shoulders are there. I have to say that on Manitoulin Island we've almost got the loop done. We're working very hard to finish the east end of the island, to make sure that with the upcoming resurfacing that's happening on the highways, shoulders are included. This is very key, because now we have the trail up the middle. We have the one on the west side, but if we can get the east side as well, that completes an exact cycle, and individuals can really enjoy and benefit from the culture on Manitoulin Island: have the full cycle, a short cycle, a little peek through, it's all there.

Again I don't hear enough talking about Manitoulin Island, because it's the largest freshwater island in the world. Why wouldn't we be talking about it? I'm always going to put a plug in for that. You're all welcome to join us for the passage on June 5, 6, 7. Come enjoy the culture that we have; come and enjoy the North Shore. There are many cycling community activists from Sault Ste. Marie all the way to Sudbury. We've almost got that area included within the cycling community, Madam Speaker. I'm looking forward, over the course of the summer, now that I am the co-chair of the all-party cycling community, to going out and actually engaging with all of these discussions to continue my education. I'm glad that my friends Eleanor and Norm are always going to be there to help me out with this. I look to be an advocate with them for the cycling community as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Cambridge.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's a pleasure to rise today to add some more comments to this wonderful debate this afternoon on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge. I also wanted to thank the members from Parry Sound–Muskoka and Burlington for bringing forward this bill this afternoon—to be able to discuss one of my favourite topics, which is cycling.

Madam Speaker, if you will, I know that the member from Algoma–Manitoulin, at the bike summit that I also

attended, made the commitment that he was going to get out on the bike, and I want to commend him that he's already taken up the challenge.

Here's the other challenge: He talks about all the great work that we've been doing as a province to help complete some of the trails, especially on Manitoulin Island. There's been some provincial infrastructure cycling money to be able to complete some of that. If he's going to take up the challenge, and I get up there to do that trail, I'm wondering if the member will agree to come out on the trail with me at the time.

It's great today to comment about that. I have to say that it's great to hear some of the really positive comments that we've got from many members in the House this afternoon who are actually part of the cycling caucus. I really appreciate the support.

One of the reasons that I love this topic is because I'm the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, and the cycling strategy of Ontario is my file and in my mandate letter. I've had the opportunity, for almost two years now, to be able to work on this file and to look at various ways that we can get more people out on their bike.

As we know, Madam Speaker, right now, just about three million people hop on their bike in Ontario at least once a week. Some of those folks are there daily. They're cycling and they're commuting, and they very much understand a lot of the benefits of cycling, such as the health benefits from the exercise; when you're on a bike, there's no greenhouse gas emissions being produced; it's great for tourism; it's great for just getting out and around and being social; and, also, a great way to see our province.

I also wanted to talk about road safety, because being out on the bike and sharing the road with other road users brings me back to the transportation file. I have to say that I'm enormously proud of our Ministry of Transportation. MTO has really worked very, very hard over the last few decades to ensure that we have some of the best and safest roads in North America to travel on, whether you're a pedestrian, a cyclist or a driver.

I've got to say that, over the last 10 years, Ontario has been first or second in North America as one of the safest jurisdictions in road safety, and that's something that we can be enormously proud of. The safety of our roads is always important to us. We know that there's more work that can be done, and it continues to be one of our highest priorities.

We were very pleased, last year, to be able to bring forward the Making Ontario's Roads Safer act, Bill 31, which had a lot of pieces of legislation that really worked hard to ensure that it's safer for our cyclists to be on the road with that. We wanted to just reiterate some of those provisions that are now coming on to our roads. It's not only protecting drivers, but our cyclists.

When we're talking about dooring, which is the act when somebody opens their car door into the path of an oncoming cyclist, those fines and some of the demerit points have been increased for drivers, upon conviction,

for dooring cyclists. If that happens, they now face a fine range of \$300 to \$1,000 and, potentially, three demerit points.

Drivers of motor vehicles must also now maintain a minimum of one-metre safe passing, where practical, when passing cyclists. The fine range for that offence has been increased to \$60 to \$500 and two demerit points, if convicted.

In addition to these items, we now allow cyclists to ride on the paved shoulders of unrestricted highways. I know that the member from Algoma-Manitoulin was talking about paved shoulders. On unrestricted highways now, cyclists can get out there. I know that some of the cycling infrastructure money that has gone forward from the province has been to address some of the areas in the province that needed more paved shoulders.

In addition to all that work, we've got the ability now to allow contraflow bicycle lanes on one-way roads. I know that here in the city of Toronto, there are several instances where that's going to be allowed.

1450

I just wanted to do a shout-out today. I know that yesterday Toronto city council approved the addition of cycling lanes on Bloor Street, and I think that that's a very good sign that we're now really putting cycling forward as a very effective mode of transportation. I didn't even talk about the good things that happen when you're out of the car: less congestion, fewer cars on the road and better transit options. That really helps those of us who need to be commuting. So we have taken strong action in a number of different ways to protect cycling.

I also wanted to identify some of the other things that we've been doing. The cycling strategy, the #CycleON Action Plan 1.0 that was released in 2014, had a number of action items that we've been delivering on steadily since that was released. One of the things that we were talking about was infrastructure money. There was \$25 million that was earmarked in that cycling strategy for infrastructure: \$15 million worth, which I've already talked about, in terms of improving provincial roads, but another \$10 million that was identified under the Ontario municipal cycling infrastructure fund.

On March 11, I was able to announce the first group of recipients of these monies in Cambridge. I was very proud that Waterloo region had three municipalities that were able to go ahead and receive their funds from this particular fund to be able to improve the infrastructure. In total, a number of my colleagues have also announced some of those funds, and it was actually up to about 37 municipalities that received this—a lot of interest, and I know we'll be looking forward to looking at other programs down the way.

The other monied fund that we have been releasing recently in the last year or two has been regarding the Cycling Training Fund, and that helps to identify areas where cycling education and making cycling safer have been beneficial.

When I'm looking at Bill 191 that we're discussing this afternoon, Madam Speaker, I find that, yes, the two

members have identified an issue in Ontario. I know the member for Burlington was saying that it's not just bike racks on the back that may obscure licence plates, but also other things, including luggage racks with big boxes or suitcases on the back, that may do that. So it is important to bring this bill forward so that we can start discussing this among the ministries that are affected by this and be able to have this discussion as to what kind of solutions we can bring forward.

Visibility is something that I know is very important, for obvious reasons, but also something that we need to resolve, because the province really does support cycling in the province and we need to identify some of the solutions. Clearly, visible licence plates are important for red light cameras as well as the 407.

I very much understand that the thrust of this bill is there to make sure that we can continue to have more and more cyclists in the province of Ontario, but also to identify those areas where we need to find a solution that works for all parties. I think it's important to pass this this afternoon, get it into committee and start looking at some of the solutions that would alleviate the problem but also allow more people in Ontario to be able to hop on their bikes.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's an honour to stand to speak to Bill 191, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act. I'm very pleased to support this bill, co-sponsored by our member from Parry Sound-Muskoka and the member from Burlington. I think this is an opportunity to see the parties come together on such a wonderful topic.

Speaker, as you've heard, as the government of Ontario continues to invest in cycling, it's important to remove the barriers to accessing cycling and active transportation opportunities. I think that's the really key point here: The laws need to keep up with the demand and the changes that have been made through the use of these racks and that type of thing. As the member from Parry Sound talked about earlier, the one particular court case was waived, if you will, as the OPP cars themselves have their plates covered. So we understand why, and we understand that this is important to do.

I think what I'd rather spend time chatting about is the exciting sport and hobby and fun of cycling for families. We heard a few minutes ago about the Ontario Municipal Cycling Infrastructure Program. North Bay did receive the maximum, \$300,000, for that, so we will have an additional investment into our trails. Quite recently, we also announced, just a couple of Fridays ago, a large Trillium Fund grant for our trails in North Bay, and we'll be seeing those trails enhanced and expanded.

They are wonderfully friendly. When I served as mayor of the city of North Bay back in 2003, in those years, we spent a tremendous amount of time building cycling trails through our parks and through our municipality. You can cycle from one end of the city all the way down to where I live, 20 miles south of North Bay, into Corbeil. You can cycle past Corbeil and on. It's

a phenomenal opportunity. In fact, our mayor, Bill Vrebosch of Corbeil—he has been a great mayor for more than 30 years in Corbeil—really lobbied hard with the province when they were repaving Highway 94 in Corbeil, right down in front of my residence, to have cycling trails paved three or more feet wide on both sides of the highway. That was a really positive move. He said, “Look, you’re paving the highway anyway. Let’s do an estimate of the amount of asphalt that we’d need to actually put bicycle lanes on both sides of the entire extent of Highway 94.” Today, you can bicycle either way, by my place now, on a major highway. I think that’s a real improvement.

For all of those cyclists who like to drive there and then bike, I will continue to support this wonderful bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Michael Coteau: He’s always on his bike.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: As the member across has indicated, I’m always on my bike. I love cycling. I think it’s an important thing. I’m honoured to stand in support of this bill.

First and foremost, let’s give credit where credit is due. We need to acknowledge the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for his leadership on this, and the member from Burlington for supporting this initiative. We need a shout-out on a couple of great organizations as well: again, back to the member from Burlington for the Share the Road Cycling Coalition, which does phenomenal work, and our co-chairs—which you’ve heard from all the members—our own co-chair from Algoma–Manitoulin spoke very passionately about his newfound love for cycling, and I was honoured to tape him in his inaugural ride, which was a great thing to see. He looks good on his bike—

Interjection: It’s on YouTube.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It’s on YouTube, I think. It’s on Facebook, at least. It’s on Facebook and Twitter. We can get that up on YouTube as well.

Anyway, a couple of things: The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka mentioned that this was one small step to make cycling easier. I think he was being very humble about it. Though it may be a small step, it speaks to a larger picture. The larger picture is this: We need to make cycling easier. We need to make the healthier choice in life, in every aspect of life, the easier choice.

I went to an amazing event talking about health promotion. All the advocates, whether they were doctors or health promoters, talked about: In life, people are drawn to the easier choice. If it’s easier to take the elevator, they’ll take the elevator. But if you make a building where stairs are very easy to access and they’re front and centre and they’re beautiful, people are more likely to take the stairs. If you hide the stairs in the back corner of a building and it’s hard to find and it’s difficult to get to, people will be less likely to use the stairs. So in

general, whether it’s nutrition or whether it’s activities, if you make healthier choices easier, people will make those decisions.

With cycling, we should ensure that there’s no barrier to cycling. If people want to, for recreational purposes, take their bikes out to a certain area, to a rural community or a community with a beautiful biking trail along the river, along the lake, they should be able to do that, and we should not create barriers for them.

1500

The purpose of this bill is to ensure that people who travel with their bicycles are not going to be penalized for doing so. That’s an amazing initiative, an important initiative, and it speaks to that broader concept of how we can make cycling easier to do and more accessible in our city. It’s an important bill, and I support it.

I think the story, the real-life example, was very poignant. It’s very important to provide real-life examples of people who weren’t trying to evade the law in any way. In fact, they had the transponder. I think it’s an important point to point out—that they were travelling on the 407, but they had the transponder, so they weren’t trying to avoid any tolls. But they were charged and given a highway traffic offence for something where they weren’t really trying to evade the law; they were just trying to engage in an activity that many people engage in. I think it’s absolutely important.

When we talk about the cycling strategy, there are a number of different areas. We talk about Toronto: I also want to give a shout-out to city council for passing that amazing initiative to be able to have bicycles on Bloor. It has been the work of advocates for a number of years, and I thank the member across for mentioning that. I know that our own leader Jack Layton was one of the champions behind this as well, but there are a number of people, and we should give credit to all the people who have been tireless in their advocacy to ensure that was brought back. I know there was some concern around other areas where there were cycling lanes that were in existence and that were taken out, and now we’re wanting to see them come back. Bicycles on Bloor is an amazing initiative.

When we look at cycling in communities where there is a greater percentage of people who are cyclists and when we look at the network of not only trails, but bike lanes, what we need to do is make sure that they connect, that they provide a grid, so you can actually get to places where you want to go in a way that’s safe, and you feel secure. We need to connect to different pathways. Bloor is an amazing connecting pathway; it criss-crosses the city in a very strategic way. But we need to make sure that the other bike lanes also intersect in a way that you can actually travel around the city and avoid some of the areas which are more difficult to ride in.

I know I ride on roads all time, and I probably wouldn’t want people who are less experienced to get on those roads, because when you don’t have a bicycle lane, it makes you feel less comfortable and you feel a little bit intimidated with cars zipping by you. When you have

that protected lane, it makes you feel more comfortable. We know, and studies show very clearly, that the more protected lanes you have, the more safe and secure the lanes are, the more people get out and bicycle. One of the major barriers to cycling for most people is that they feel that it's something that they're afraid to do. They feel like cycling in a city is dangerous and scary. If that's the barrier, we need to do everything we can to get rid of that barrier. Anyway, I'm a big supporter of this.

Another thing: I want to give a shout-out to the suburbs—because in the suburbs we have vast areas. They're sprawling, but one of the saving graces is that if we could bring in more cycling lanes into the suburbs, we could make those cities more livable. Brampton needs more cycling, as well as the rest of Peel, as well as the rest of the entire GTA.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I'm pleased today to join the debate on Bill 191.

The cycling community is very strong in the Brampton-Springdale community, and I've had the opportunity to meet with them on a number of occasions. They're strong advocates for a better cycling community and to provide more options for our cycling community. They're actually hosting a wonderful event in Brampton on June 18 called Bike the Creek, which I look forward to participating in, as I did last year. I'm not as much of a cyclist as some of my colleagues, but last year I had the opportunity to cycle with Bike the Creek for about 15 kilometres. This year, I'm hoping to do the full 40K.

The cycling community in Brampton was very excited when we did receive funding just recently. We received maximum funding to improve infrastructure projects and to improve existing biking paths in Brampton. This is a very important project for us; it was a gap that they were going to be closing under the bridge of the 407 and the 401.

We want to ensure that people in our biking and cycling community are safe, and we want them to have all the benefits that they can to be able to ride and enjoy and to encourage more people to cycle in our communities. It's environmentally friendly, and it's definitely a separate option—it's a new and exciting option for people.

Many municipalities from across the province submitted expressions of interest when they submitted for the infrastructure. We were able to get it. I'm also proud to say that the city of Brampton supported that by meeting it dollar for dollar so that we could have a more firm investment and continue our projects.

I understand that this bill proposes that if a carrying rack, such as a bicycle rack, is mounted to the rear of a vehicle, that the individual should still be able to drive their vehicle on the highway, even if the rack obscures the licence plate. This is a very interesting proposal, and I understand it has support from Ontario's cycling community.

We know it's important for both our front and rear licence plates to be visible for a few reasons. Firstly, it allows for law enforcement officers to be able to see. But as long as the plate is visible, we should allow this opportunity. It gives people more opportunities, and it allows them to travel with their bikes, go to different areas and have their bikes available to them.

I'm supportive of this proposal and I look forward to it passing, so that the cycling community has even more options and the cycling community can continue to grow. I know that approximately three million people cycle once a week right now, and if we allow things like this to happen, it will only grow.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I, too, was going to introduce Stewart Kiff, but he has not invited me over for dinner, so I'm going to hold that off for another time.

It's an absolute pleasure to speak to Bill 191, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: I won't go there.

I'd like to commend my colleagues, from Parry Sound, Norm Miller, and Eleanor McMahon from Burlington for this. It's a good bill. It's one about safety. It's one that I think, as one of my other colleagues said, is pretty easy to implement and we should move on.

I'm going to spend most of my time talking about the benefits of activity. Madam Speaker, I don't know if you know, but I was a recreation director in my first career. I'm still a big promoter of that. The area of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is one of those areas where we certainly promote and encourage everyone to come and visit us and enjoy because we're one of the top destinations in Ontario for people who lead an active lifestyle.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Groundhogs even—good. Without a shadow of a doubt, our groundhogs are wonderful. Thanks for bringing that up, Mr. Hudak. I know you always enjoyed your visits to Wiarton on February 2, although you did not cycle that day.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: That day.

My colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin as well—they have a great area up there. MICA, I believe it is, Manitoulin Island cycling association. A lot of people, particularly down here in the GTA, from London, Kitchener and Parry Sound, they even come around the horn, come through my riding. They depart from the most northern spot in southern Ontario, Tobermory, and go across on the Chi-Cheemaun, the big canoe, to Manitoulin Island, and enjoy it there.

But I'm going to get back to Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I've given him the plug he needed, and we get along well.

Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound has some of the best recreational trails for biking, ATVing, cross-country skiing, equestrian riding, snowmobiling, trail running and snowshoeing. You name it and you can do it in Bruce—

Grey–Owen Sound. We're home to the Georgian Trail, the Tom Thomson Trail, the Rail Trail and, of course, the Bruce Trail. The Bruce Trail is the oldest and longest continuous public footpath in Canada. It's 890 kilometres of connectivity and sustainable transportation. It is the only continuous public access to the Niagara Escarpment, a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, and attracts about 400,000 visits per year.

Trail use in my riding alone generates over \$24.5 million annually between Grey and Bruce, and it's one of the reasons that I'm actually supporting Bill 100. The tourism economy for our area and across our province is absolutely significant. We need to make sure that that piece of legislation—the minister has assured me that he'll listen to some of the amendments that are going to be made to make that bill even better and stronger and appease the people who have concerns about it now. So we're hoping that will happen.

I want to applaud the government and suggest they continue to invest in cycling infrastructure and remove barriers to accessing cycling and active transportation opportunities. As we all know, many people have to transport those bicycles. I believe my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London said that. He likes to go out cycling, but you have to transport the cycle sometimes to get to a safe spot, a trail, so you're not worried.

I want to acknowledge, again, my colleague from Burlington who, sadly, lost her husband, a police officer, to cycling. We need to encourage those safe opportunities for people to be able to get out, off the roads and onto the beaten path.

This bill aims to ease the regulations by allowing people to use bicycle racks on the back of their cars without the fear of being charged for having their licence plate obscured by the rack. Currently, the rules are not black and white. Some people have been ticketed for having their plates obscured by this type of bike rack. I believe my colleague from Parry Sound illustrated a very fine point there. There are ways that we should be able to do this.

I am a strong supporter of integrating healthy physical activity into everyday life and fostering that. I want to encourage and have everyone's support so that we can have active lifestyles and encourage everyone to get out, hit those trails, and this bill will help us to do that safely.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to return to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka to wrap up.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to all the members who spoke to the bill, and to my co-chair, the member from Burlington, for supporting this bill.

1510

I'd like to begin by welcoming a good friend from Bracebridge, Muskoka: John de Koning, who is here visiting and interested in this debate, as well. I'm sure that he is going to become a big cyclist in the not-too-distant future.

I thank the members for their comments.

I'm a little envious of the member from Nipissing, who talked about the Ontario Municipal Cycling Infrastructure Program, because when I look down the list, I don't think any of it went to Parry Sound–Muskoka. We certainly have some good projects and asks that are out there. I know that we're working on the trail around Georgian Bay, which would go up Algoma–Manitoulin and then circle Georgian Bay.

When I went to the Parry Sound municipal meeting last week, the first mayor I met was actually talking to another mayor about Highway 124, saying that there's only one little section of 124 between Sundridge and Parry Sound that needs paved shoulders, and they're looking for the support of Dale Robinson of McDougall township to make that up.

In Carling township, there's a huge desire to have either a separate trail or a paved shoulder from the most popular provincial park in the province, Killbear Provincial Park, to the town of Parry Sound. That's a distance of about 30 kilometres. A good part of it does have safe riding conditions, but there's also Highway 559, which does not at this time.

Hopefully, in the future rounds, some of these very worthwhile projects will be looked upon kindly, and we will get some of that investment in Parry Sound–Muskoka, as well.

I think this bill allows us to fix a problem that does exist. I think that there are solutions. We've heard about challenges with the 407. I do believe that the 407 takes pictures of the front and rear licence plates, so that shouldn't be a problem, and I'm sure we can work around the red light situation.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will deal with the vote at the end of private members' public business.

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ACCESSIBLE PARKING IN MUNICIPALITIES ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 CONCERNANT LA COMMISSION D'ENQUÊTE SUR LE STATIONNEMENT ACCESSIBLE DANS LES MUNICIPALITÉS

Ms. Martow moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 187, An Act to establish a commission of inquiry into accessible parking in municipalities / Projet de loi 187, Loi visant la création d'une commission d'enquête sur le stationnement accessible dans les municipalités.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I just want to comment on some amazing people who made the effort to come out today. When you see them up in the galleries—some people had to have a little bit of help climbing the stairs; some

people have scooters; some people have wheelchairs; some people have lots of friends with them.

I just want to mention, first, Paige Zaldin and her mom, Michelle. Paige was really the spearhead for this because, about five years ago, her mom, Michelle, got a parking ticket in Vaughan for parking where you're allowed to park in Toronto. She assumed that Vaughan, the municipality just bordering Toronto, had the same parking rules. Luckily, she didn't have to pay the ticket, I believe, because she found some kind of error in the licence plate number or the date. Michelle is also involved with the UJA accessibility committee, which is called Itanu.

We also have Peter Athanasopoulos from Spinal Cord Injury Ontario. He's the senior manager of public policy and government relations.

We have Louise Russo. A lot of you may recognize her name because she's a bit of a hero for a lot of people, not just because she was injured in, basically, a mafia shootout, but because of her advocacy work and her braveness in the face of what she went through. She founded WAVE, Working Against Violence Everyday, which I'm sure keeps her busy with all of her advocacy work. We all appreciate everything she's doing.

Wendy Murphy with Spinal Cord Injury Ontario is here, as well. She's a former reporter for Citytv.

Lynda Staples is also with Spinal Cord Injury Ontario.

Eddie Rice is the chairman of the Ontarians with disabilities committee of B'nai Brith.

I'm not sure if he's here yet: Patrick Bramm from Reena, which is for people with disabilities in the Jewish community. It's a very well-known organization in my riding.

Stewart Kiff: I'm just going to say my friend Stewart Kiff, who is here, because he has so many different jobs that he does. Dr. Iris Kulbatski: I went to a fantastic show of Wheel Dance, which is wheelchairs and able-bodied people who dance with them; she's the executive director of the organization. I also want to mention quickly David Lepofsky, chair of the AODA Alliance, who sent me lots of notice but, regretfully, couldn't be here today. He's a lawyer and a professor at York University.

I want to borrow a line from my colleague the member from York Simcoe. She's going to be speaking on this as well. Basically, what she said is that accessible parking needs to be accessible. That's what we're speaking about here today. Right now, we have parking rules that are set by municipalities in the best interests of the people who live in those municipalities. The problem is that people have enough challenges if they're dealing with mobility challenges of any type, whether visible or not visible, that they shouldn't be carrying around a stack of papers dealing with the different rules for different municipalities.

I'm not suggesting that we should order how municipalities set their parking rules; I'm just suggesting that we need to sit down—all the accessibility groups, some of which are represented here and some of which might be watching at home—and have those discussions with

the municipalities on how best to streamline and, where possible, have as much the same rules; and if the rules aren't the same, to maybe have a system of posting so that people will know, because in my opinion it shouldn't be that the rules south of Steeles or north of Steeles are so vastly different. Hopefully, people here are agreeing.

The other side of the coin is permits. We're seeing with the blitz by the Toronto police that went on earlier this year that close to half of the permits seem to be either counterfeit or being used fraudulently, and the system definitely needs some tightening up. There's a serious problem when people are trying to get somewhere and it's not easy, I'm sure, for them to get into their vehicle or their friend's or relative's vehicle. It's hard enough to get into the vehicle itself without arriving somewhere and not being able to find parking.

These are not patients; these are not sick people. These are people who want their independence and deserve their independence, and who deserve our compassion and help, but not our pity. We used to say "disabled parking," and I think it's sometimes hard to make that change. But words are very powerful, and there is a lot to be said for changing some of the terminology we use every day. I wouldn't punish somebody for saying "disabled parking" or "handicapped parking," but we all have to put our heads around the fact that it's not about sickness; it's about accessibility and having everybody in the community being part of that community.

I just want to mention the Toronto exemptions, in case people don't know. Some of them are that if it's not rush hour, you can park where it says "no parking." That is not available in most other municipalities in Ontario. You don't have to put money in the on-street meters, you don't need on-street permits—at my sister's house, you need an on-street permit—and there are no time limits. This is done to be fair to people, to help people and to show compassion for people who have mobility challenges. Unfortunately, other people in the community see this as an opportunity to either get away without paying or to somehow circumvent the time limits that are placed there.

We also have a lot of challenges in terms of public awareness and education. We always talk about kids in school being made aware of what it means to have accessible parking and permits. I have a feeling that if we're teaching kids that it's not right to use that permit when grandma is not in the car, those kids will speak up and, at least when they're in the car, I'm betting that their parents aren't going to dare do it. Parents, we all know, do behave better in front of children.

Maybe we have to get through to the kids and get them speaking and letting people know that it's not appropriate to say something if you see somebody who parks in handicapped parking: "You don't look like you have mobility challenges" or "I don't see a wheelchair." It's not the public's place to make those kinds of nasty comments. We hear that way too often. People can have challenges that might not be visible to us. But we can see where that's coming from, because too many people

know of fraud with accessibility permits and accessible parking, so when they see somebody they don't know or they don't see a wheelchair, they assume it's fraud.

1520

That's when we know we have a big problem here: If people see somebody parking in accessible parking and assume that there's some kind of fraud going on—maybe there is, but we don't want the public to feel that there's some kind of scam that they should be trying to get on. We want to nip this in the bud. We want to make sure that, going forward, people are treated respectfully and those spots are for where they're supposed to go.

I want to just read a couple of comments that I was given by people in terms of their challenges in terms of what they face. One is from Wendy Murphy herself, who is here:

“Confined to a wheelchair following a car accident in 1984, I have been around the disabled parking permit issue since its inception back in the early 1980s. I am saddened to see where it seems to have lost its initial purpose.

“Easy access becomes paramount when trying to maintain independence while in a wheelchair, most importantly when going about daily routines while driving. Close access to the entrance of public buildings is what the disabled parking permit was initially designed to offer those using wheelchairs. Today, the designated parking spots have often lost their size in dimensions, and their availability. These frustrations are escalated when weather conditions are difficult, such as winter.”

I think that that's what we need to get through to developers and the municipalities, who are now very often giving the developers permission to not put in as many parking spots. They are seeing higher density, and maybe there's transit going in the area, but if accessible parking is a percentage of the parking spots, then those numbers of accessible parking go down if we allow developers and redevelopment of existing infrastructure to somehow have less parking and then somehow have less accessible parking. Maybe those ratios have to be adjusted and changed along the way.

I want to just mention quickly that the March of Dimes' Steven Christianson sent a comment:

“As someone living with post-polio syndrome, I need to use a car for transportation because if I overwork my muscles, the nerve damage in my legs increases.” He runs a business, and his life revolves around worrying about parking and looking for parking. That's really disturbing, Madam Speaker. He talks about the area of Kingston, where he feels that accessible parking is being greatly diminished in his community. He is frustrated, and I certainly don't blame him and I don't think anybody here blames him.

I just want to mention that I've been offered a challenge, and I'm rising up to the challenge. It's called the Wheelchair Challenge and it's taking place this year on September 18. Maybe somebody here wants to join my team; six people can be on the team.

What they've done is so interesting. I think a lot of us remember when Mayor John Tory took the challenge and spent a day in a wheelchair. The feedback they got from getting a few people to do that—this is through Spinal Cord Injury Ontario—is that it was just too difficult to be in a wheelchair all day. You can certainly see why, because maybe our homes and our offices aren't set up for us just for that day.

So what they've done is that they've made it fun. They are having a carnival and they're having teams. You get the idea of what it's like to be in that wheelchair, but in a fun sort of atmosphere. It's a fun challenge, and I'm sure there's going to be lots of great food. They mentioned lots of great games as well.

I'm taking the challenge, and I'm asking everybody else to join me—also our federal colleagues, the MPs, if they also want to join the challenge and create some teams. This event can build momentum and maybe also bring those kids out to educate them. I think that, a lot of times, kids think it would be fun to be in that wheelchair. If a child has an opportunity to be in a wheelchair, I think you should give them that opportunity. I don't think that the person whose wheelchair it is feels disrespected; I think that they welcome us to take a turn in their wheelchair and see how difficult it is to manoeuvre.

I'm looking forward to everybody's comments, and I'm hoping that we can get this to committee to have that discussion on how to streamline and how to prevent fraud.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm very pleased to be able to stand in this fine Legislature and add comment on Bill 187, An Act to establish a commission of inquiry into accessible parking in municipalities.

I very much appreciated listening to the presentation from the member from Thornhill. These are important conversations to be having, because in the coming up on two years I've been in this Legislature, we haven't had very many conversations about accessibility. Certainly we haven't had enough. I don't know that we could ever have enough, because until everyone can access all parts of our province and all parts of our systems, we still have conversations to have.

Specifically today, we're talking about the bill put forward and it is a bill that requires the Premier to recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that a commission be appointed to investigate accessible parking for persons with disabilities. Specifically, this commission would develop standard municipal bylaws and make recommendations concerning legislation to require municipalities to adopt and enforce such bylaws. The point is that the only people who should be parking in accessible spaces meant for Ontarians with disabilities are Ontarians who meet those criteria. That's the end of it.

We hear about people who are becoming almost like they're policing it. They think, “Oh, that person doesn't appear to be disabled. They're misusing the pass.” That's

not what this is about. This is not about the misuse of the system; it's about making sure that there are standards, because it isn't up to me and the public to identify what someone's challenge with accessibility is. Invisible disabilities are everywhere, and we're never going to see them, nor should we. That's the point. We want people to have full and fair access and be able to participate.

I've had a constituent who has called our office on and off through the last couple of years and lets us know every time that there is a challenge at our GO parking lots, and some of our other public spaces where it isn't being enforced: that there are individuals parking in accessible spaces and it would seem they shouldn't. We do need to crack down. We know that during periodic crackdowns, specifically the Toronto police have regularly seized over 1,000 permits each year for misuse. That's terrible.

I appreciate the goal of this bill, and I think that it is something that's very important to have the municipalities involved with a commission that would develop the standard bylaws so that we're all on the same page and making things more accessible.

While we're talking about accessibility and taking this opportunity: In my constituency office, we had the chance to make some renovations and to open up fresh to the community. We thought, "Well, good, it's accessible." Then we went, "Well, hold on. What is 'accessible,' actually? We think it's accessible." We made sure we had an accessible washroom in the different parts, and then we thought, "We better bring in someone else to weigh in before this is a done deal." I'm learning about accessibility, but I don't have to live it on a daily basis and be aware of the different accessibility standards that seem to exist out there, if I can call them standards.

We did have someone come in and point out the fact that our washroom needed to be large enough, not just for a wheelchair—because a wheelchair is not a standard piece of equipment for people who have mobility challenges. A four-wheeled scooter, a three-wheeled scooter: These are larger vehicles with more of a turning circle. We need to be able to get into a place and turn around and leave. These are things we need to think about.

We have a push panel outside the door that is actually pretty cool. Technology has come a long way. It isn't just a press panel; it's an entire strip that can be pressed by a service animal, by any type of mobility device or certainly by a person, and it allows more people to be able to come in. In fact, I would venture to say everyone, and that's the point. Especially when we're talking about anything to do with our Legislature, we want full access.

This is a chance to talk about our standards, to talk about what it could look like. I think we should also take a moment to talk about what it does look like or doesn't look like, and back to that point of standards.

1530

I had the opportunity to speak to the Durham region stroke recovery group about a year ago. While I was there talking to them about post-stroke physiotherapy and specific issues, a lot of what we talked about—it came

out that they couldn't access places in our community, whether it was because there were accessible parking spaces but they were blocked; or whether it was because there wasn't a curb, that something was marked accessible but there wasn't a lowered curb, or there was but there was a flowerpot in the way and you couldn't actually get into a restaurant or a building.

There were a number of stories of restaurants and entryways—doorways that have been specifically designed for Canadian winters to keep the cold air out; the two doors never open at the same time and winter stays on the outside and fine, warm dining stays on the inside. But the truth of the matter is, it also keeps out our community members. If someone is in a chair with a family member or partner behind them, they can't press both doors, they can't open the doors.

It's just recognizing that everywhere we look, we should be thinking about who can come in and how can they access—we need to see how to bring more people into our systems.

Thank you. I think that's it for time. In fact, I've gone over. There's so much to say, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm happy to be able to stand and speak to this private member's bill, because I think it raises some really important issues about access, about fair play, and about what we as citizens in our communities need to be doing to make sure that people who have mobility issues can have full access to the services that they need.

My mother is now of a certain age and has one of these permits, and nothing makes my blood boil more—now that I'm aware of some of the trials and tribulations she goes through—than when I'm out and about and I see someone who appears to be able-bodied parking in a spot that they really shouldn't be parking in.

As a town councillor in Aurora, we made it a special focus to make sure that our bylaw people were enforcing those regulations. I think things are much better, but I still hear about my mother and her friends and some of the challenges they have as they go about their daily lives. It's really important, obviously, too, that we make sure that especially seniors are able to maintain their mobility, and that includes making sure there is a robust permitting system.

I thank the member opposite for bringing forward her private member's bill on this important issue. This is an important one. I think members on both sides of the House can agree that the misuse and abuse of accessible parking permits and parking spaces is unacceptable and reprehensible.

I think, however, that it's important we fully understand the implications of the proposed commission of inquiry that her bill proposes. I know, and it's maybe my municipal councillor background—as municipal councillors, we don't always look favourably upon things being pushed down on us from on high. I am certainly sensitive to that. I know that our municipalities have their own

needs and challenges, and the Municipal Act allows them to establish the bylaws that reflect local concerns. Any reforms to the accessible parking permit program, I fear, will need to reflect this and allow the municipalities to manage and regulate their own bylaws.

Since 2006—just a bit of history we've looked up here—our government has made a number of improvements to the accessible parking permit program to increase security and reduce the misuse of permits. Most recently, in January 2016, we introduced enhanced permits that are more secure and tamper-resistant. We've implemented new identification requirements for applicants and third-party representatives to strengthen the integrity of the program. Individuals applying for, renewing or replacing a permit are now required to produce valid ID that proves their legal name, date of birth and signature. Third parties who submit an application are required to provide a letter of authorization signed by them and the applicant or a power-of-attorney document. So some significant enhancements have occurred already.

In addition to these changes, our government has reduced the validity period for interim permits from six months to three months, initiated new verification measures to identify and prevent fraud, revised and improved application forms, and developed and deployed a standardized approach for reporting accessible parking permit seizures, in partnership with municipal officials.

Ontario has the highest fines in Canada for the misuse of accessible parking permits, and to that I say, "Hear, hear." ServiceOntario will cancel or refuse to issue a replacement permit if one has been seized for misuse. We'll continue engaging the enforcement community and stakeholders to specifically address permit fraud and misuse in Ontario. As I said at the outset, everybody in this House will agree that the misuse of these permits is absolutely reprehensible. It's so important that we ensure that the credibility of the program remains intact. I think that a lot of what the government has done over the past year and a half speaks to making sure that that system is, in fact, very credible and very accessible.

Again, it has been said before: The challenge that we face is that this is a two-tier issue. We have the province, which issues the permits, but we have the municipalities, and each one of them is different, each with their own needs. It's up to them to decide where people can park through bylaw and how things are going to be enforced. It is a bit of a challenge. I know that in the work that I do and as a former municipal councillor, not only did I hear it, but I said it all the time, "One size does not fit all across Ontario." Any thinking that one Ontario law would take care of the issue across Ontario, I suspect, would not work because, as I said, each municipality has their own needs.

I think I'll leave it there, other than to say, again, I wanted to thank the member for bringing forward her bill. We all agree that the permits are very important, and the credibility of that program needs to be maintained. I'm not convinced that we need a full commission of

inquiry. I think what we need to do is just steady progress, as we've demonstrated, over the past couple of years, that we're enhancing the protection of those permits.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to rise in support of my colleague from Thornhill's bill, Bill 187.

Look, I listened to the parliamentary assistant a few moments ago boasting that Ontario has the highest fines in Canada. I'll say, respectfully, that it's clearly not working. There's no doubt about it, a number of us have sensed that the number of violations have increased substantially. I picked that up.

I do talk radio from time to time; I have a show on Newstalk 1010, from 5 to 6 on Sundays, and CFRA Ottawa and panels. It pops up on the panels quite a bit. I know Mr. Baker is also on those panels, Mr. Singh is on those panels as well, and Ms. DiNovo. It has popped up a number of times. What I'm going to say to the member is that it's not a matter of simply fines; what you need is more Ryan Favros. You need more people like Ryan Favro.

You may remember this story, Speaker. The headline was "Video of Woman Pitching Coffee at Man over Disabled Parking Spot at Tim Hortons Goes Viral."

"A YouTube video of a woman angered by a man who confronted her for parking in a disabled parking spot outside a Tim Hortons in Toronto has sparked howls of online outrage."

This video was posted by a man named Ryan Favro; it had over 100,000 views, social-shaming this individual who parked in that spot.

1540

When she was confronted, by the way—I'll read you this: Ryan politely asks her about her Jeep parked in the Tim Hortons with no pass on it, no permit. She refuses to respond, so he says, "So why do you park in a handicapped parking spot? Are you handicapped?" "No," she says and walks away. "Well, what makes you so special that you can park in a handicapped spot?" he asks. "Pardon me, I will break your (expletive) phone," this woman says, as she gets into the driver's seat and slams the door. She then gets back out and hurls what appears to be iced coffee, along with profanities, at the videographer. The sad thing is, I think she only got a warning by the police after all of this was caught on video.

But social shaming—good for Ryan Favro. I actually think we need more of this. We no doubt will have some parking enforcement officers—those things are up—but a little bit of social shaming I think also goes a long way. It takes a particularly low form of humanity to steal a parking spot from someone with a disability, doesn't it? Because they're too important to walk the extra steps to get into a store? Come on. Fine them, shame them. I think that will go a long way.

In New Zealand, they also have a demerit point, which goes further; it impacts your insurance on your driver's licence for this type of loathsome activity.

Let me add on one more thing. There is an expression in life that I've become quite fond of: There's an app for that. God bless human ingenuity and rising to an important cause. Let me tell you a little bit about some of the apps that are out there and then I'll get to a final point. I know my colleagues want to speak as well.

Here we go. "New App Could Let Citizens Report Illegal Parking, Get Cut of Fine." What a novel idea. It's probably new for some of us to contemplate, but I kind of like it. So Mr. Potts, for example, may be a crusader to make sure people with disabilities have good parking. He finds somebody else has parked in that spot. He can snap a few photos, send them up through the app, which then goes to the municipality, the enforcement agency. The person gets fined, and you would have your choice of getting a cut of that fine or donating to your local charity, up to 20%. I think it's a fabulous idea. The app is called SpotSquad. I think it's spotsquad.ca, but just do a little search on your app downloading device and get SpotSquad.

How many people would be willing to snitch on their fellow citizens' poor parking?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I would.

Mr. Tim Hudak: There you go. I think a lot of us would. For other types of violations, jaywalking or something like that, no. But it's getting increasingly serious. I think more people would take this up.

The inventor of SpotSquad said that based on the amount of people who have already created SpotSquad accounts, there are going to be "lots of people who want to do this." I like the notion of donating your share of that fine back to a charity of your choice.

There's one in the States as well—I don't know if it's in Canada or Ontario yet—called Parking Mobility. This one has a nice feature too. This story is called "Finally: An App to Report Drivers Illegally Parked in Handicapped Spots." It says: for "folks like us" who want to "report d-bag drivers who use parking spots meant for the disabled," you can fine them—it's parliamentary, isn't it, Speaker, when I say "d-bag?" Twenty per cent goes to charity. Also, Parking Mobility allows posting of disabled spots anywhere in the city or the province or the state to make it easier for those looking for that type of parking to actually find it.

I think at the end of the day we will move from a world of paper-based permits and writing up tickets to one where you will actually have sensors in the spots that will connect with sensors in the vehicle so that you know only somebody with a disability can use that spot. We're moving in that direction, Speaker, when it comes to parking in general. Satellite technology—what do they call them?—blue hornets, green hornets; what colour are those hornets?

I think technology is going to solve these problems, but the only way we'll get there, with respect to my colleagues, is by passing the bill standing in the name of

the member for Thornhill, Bill 187. Let's look at these new options. It can make one heck of a difference and it's needed.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: First, it's always an honour to stand in this House, particularly today on Bill 187, An Act to establish a commission of inquiry into accessible parking in municipalities.

The member from—Mr. Hudak—was talking about the future; I'm going to talk a little about the past. I'm not disabled. My mom was born with spina bifida and she couldn't walk until she was seven or eight years old. She was born in World War II, when the people of Holland starved. A lot of people were born disabled at that time. They performed experimental surgery and my mom could walk after that. She's not an Olympic runner, but she can walk.

So when I was a kid, I spent a lot of time looking for places to park. And this isn't part of this debate, but I asked my mom once, "What was the toughest thing you ever faced?" And the toughest thing she ever faced was when they immigrated to Canada, they only allowed healthy people. My mom was inspected by a doctor and she had to stand for a certain length of time, and if she didn't stand long enough, her family couldn't come to Canada.

So, do we have a ways to go? Yes. But we've also come a long ways. I think we have to recognize that. But having said that, in our modern society there are a lot of things that we can do better, and if creating this commission of inquiry—and I know that sounds big, but knowing the member who proposed this fairly well, she's a practical person. She's not out to make the big commission of inquiry that takes years and spends millions. She's out to fix things for people, things that still happen.

When I'm with my mom and we're looking for a parking spot—she doesn't drive anymore; I drive—we don't always look for the handicapped spots, because frequently the handicapped parking spots are in the worst place to actually access the building. You'll have the handicapped parking spot on one side of the building and you'll have the part that doesn't have the curb on the other side of the building. It's crazy. It's like, the people who pick the spots don't look at how they actually can be used.

As far as people misusing, yes, people misuse these spots, and sometimes—we have very public lives. Most people in my riding know me, so sometimes I will park with my mom's sticker in the car to pick up my mom from a doctor or something, but I do it with fear because someone with an app could take a picture of me using a handicapped spot, but they'll be long gone by the time I'm holding my mom's arm, putting her in the car. That's the danger of some of those things. That's a true, true danger. I don't lie awake at night about it, but every time I do anything with my mom and we park somewhere where I can help my mom and I'm not within picture

distance of my mom, it's a problem. I'm all for apps that do this and apps that do that, but sometimes you have to be very careful, because you're actually going to hurt the people who are legitimately trying to help their loved ones, be they family, be they friends. That's something we all have to be cognizant of. I feel that a lot of times.

So we fully support this, anything that brings more people looking at this issue, more people understanding this issue. Hopefully, some other people who have watched this debate will gain some understanding of the issues these people face, the issues their families face. We've come so far, there's no reason why we can't go further, because many times a lot of the big steps have been taken, and now we have to make sure that the things we do make sense. I think that's what this bill is looking for. That's what the member, I believe, is looking for. I fully support it and I would like to fully thank her for bringing this issue forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

1550

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to rise this afternoon and spend a few minutes to add to the debate on Bill 187. I want, first of all, to applaud my colleague the member for Thornhill for landing on an issue that we all recognize but nobody has taken the time to understand the mechanics and the difficulties that people face.

I just have to comment on the couple of comments that have been made about the assumption that when an able-bodied person gets out, they're misusing the accessible parking space. You have no idea if or when the wheelchair comes out next or if the person needs physical help to get out of the car. In moving this issue forward, we have to maintain our understanding of the importance of not coming to a quick judgment.

But there are some things that I think need to be addressed. One of them is the question of the handicapped parking rules. Not only are they complicated, but they are increasingly inconsistent across the province. We heard an earlier comment made about the municipalities putting their own rules and regulations in place but, certainly from a consumer point of view, that just adds to the complication.

In my riding of York-Simcoe, not only are the rules different in York region and in Simcoe county, but even across the various municipalities. We not only have thousands of residents who struggle with mobility itself; they now have the extra burden of complex accessible parking rules that vary across municipal borders.

I looked at a possible hypothetical constituent, one who lives in Georgina, works in Newmarket and sometimes travels to Toronto. He or she would have to go through three separate sets of rules and then add more if they went to Markham or Barrie. Quite simply, those people need a universal framework within which to operate.

I can tell you that in Georgina, for instance, public places are required to provide designated accessible parking spaces. Then it drops down to the fine for this

parking infraction, which is \$300. But it is noted, at the same time, that certain types of parking violations are enforced on a proactive basis while others are only enforced on a complaint basis. So you've got difficulty with that.

Then if you go and look in Innisfil, they have authorized signs designating a space, but no person shall park or stop a vehicle or allow a vehicle to remain parked or stopped in a parking space reserved for persons with disabilities unless the valid disabled person parking permit is openly displayed, and so forth.

I think that's the first thing that needs to be addressed: how to come up with adequate language similarities. I remind people that people can't follow laws if they don't know what they are; and if they vary from one place to another, it's grounds for not knowing what the rules are. As was quoted earlier by my colleague from Thornhill, quite simply, the laws surrounding accessible parking, frankly, need to be accessible. At the same time, we need to crack down on accessible parking permit fraud.

So there's much for a group to do. I applaud the member for taking on this initiative. It's certainly an opportunity for people to look at. It's something that makes the lives of people much easier and better, if we look at this problem.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Hon. Mario Sergio: First of all, before I make some comments on the bill that is in front of us today, let me welcome and say hello, on behalf of the House here, to a constituent of mine, Louise Russo. I'm sure she does not need any introduction to this House. With Louise Russo, we also have a couple of members from the Ontarians with Disabilities Sub-Committee, which is from the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada, Edward Rice, up in the, what do you call it, the Speaker's gallery up there—Speaker, that's your gallery—and a couple of other guests who are here to assist in the debate that is taking place today. I want to congratulate the member from Thornhill for bringing this to the attention of the House.

I have to say that I go back now to sometime in November last year when I started to deal with this particular issue as the minister, if you will. It was subsequent to a meeting which I had with Ms. Russo and others in the community, which was exactly pegged to these same issues. There are many reasons why I would like to say that something is being done about solving this particular problem. But if there is one, it's to get me out of trouble, if you will: Every time I see someone parking in a handicapped space and then running into the store, trying to say, "Oh, I'm going to buy cigarettes and then come out quickly," I stop there and I look at the person there, and then I get stared back at. I've gotten into an argument a couple of times. I want to avoid that situation where our nature takes over and says, "Ah, it's okay. There's nobody parking in here. I'm going to park in the handicapped parking spaces." I say, "Why are you doing that?" Then I get a very dirty look.

I'll stop right there. I don't want to go any further, but I believe this is something that needs to be looked at. I really don't know that we need a very particular inquiry to get to the stage that we want to go to, but we know the problem. I know the difficulty that may exist with doing it uniformly throughout the province. There are municipalities that may want to look at the situation in their own way, in a different way, and that would be okay as long as they look at it.

I speak mainly for the city of Toronto. There's a little town called Toronto here, and I have to say that the abuses continue to escalate because of a lack of, if you will, people that go around, check it out and issue tickets and what have you. We don't have the parking officers required. The whole city of Toronto has six, so you can imagine me calling from Finch and Islington, reporting it, and someone down at the Beach will have to come up and take a look at the parking space that I'm reporting at Finch and Islington. It's impossible.

I think, number one, we have to educate the public. The only way to do that is to involve some stricter rules and regulations and penalties as well. Otherwise, they won't get the message.

I can see that my time is going too fast even though I was not even allowed to say something, but I figure, if I can, I will. I'm getting the nod to say, "Cut it." But I'm going to take all the time, and if I have an extension I'm going to say even more about it, because it's something that we have to demonstrate to our people in need, people like Louise Russo and company there. We need to do something.

You know what? It's not only for them. It's for the family members as well, because the family members will see and say, "I want to congratulate Gila Martow for bringing this to the floor of the House. I want to congratulate the members of the House for supporting it and doing something about it, because it's an abuse." When there is an abuse, that abuse needs to be looked after. If we have to lower the hammer a little bit heavier to do away with those abusers, send a message, educate them—if it's through imposing major fines, then I would say, "So be it." Because do you know what? It's not only abuse. I think it's the way we issue those permits as well. I think it requires a good overlook, if you will, of the way we issue those permits. It's not fair.

In my case, when I see wonderful people that can get off their truck and run, or very nice, expensive cars, and walk very gingerly, and I'm saying, "Why are they displaying a permit?"—and I know what the member on the other side has said. The mother, of course—he has the right to take the mother—whatever. But—

Interjections.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Can I move an extension, Madam Speaker? Can I move an extension?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm so sorry. So sorry—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): All right. Further debate.

1600

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Madam Speaker, I'm almost willing to offer my time back. He seemed so excited to discuss this bill, and I think we all are excited to bring out our thoughts and ideas.

It's interesting; I've been learning French for a while now, for the last few years here. It's tough to learn.

Interjections: Let's hear it.

M. Jeff Yurek: OK. J'ai pratiqué mon français. Oui?

Des voix: Oui.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: But when I hear Hudak speak in the Legislature—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): You heard the member. The members of this House know they're supposed to address each other by their ridings. Okay? I remember saying it this morning. I remind the member: Address your colleague and everybody in this House—except the ministers, by their portfolios—by their ridings, please.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: The member from Niagara West—Glanbrook, excuse me. He's my colleague here; I call him by his name all the time.

But anyway, when he talks about apps and such, it's something that we have to get used to. The member of the third party is saying that he is fearful of what these apps can cause, but what he was saying could happen could happen today already. All you need is a camera and to scan it onto your Facebook.

We can't be fearful of progress and new technology. We can actually utilize this information to make parking more accessible to those who are disabled, and that's one way to crack down.

I'll just say quickly that what I've seen John Tory do to the parking abuses on University Avenue since he started is just amazing. I drive through here Monday mornings and they're just clearing the cars out. It's called enforcement, and maybe that's what we need to pick up in the municipalities.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to return to the member from Thornhill to do the wrap-up.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to thank everybody who spoke today on the bill. I'm not going to list all the different ridings, because that will use up my two minutes.

But I do want to mention a couple of the comments. The member from Oshawa: I want to thank her for pointing out scooters, because it's not wheelchairs anymore now. We are seeing a lot of people with scooters, which require ramps that might be slightly different. I'm hearing from many stakeholders that there are posts blocking the ramps to get onto the sidewalk, or blocking where a ramp could be lowered or the back tailgate of a van could be opened.

I want to just alleviate the fears of the member from Newmarket—Aurora. My intention isn't to force any municipalities; it's to sit down with the municipalities and with all the stakeholders and advocates that are here to explain, because in the words of David Lepofsky, who is such an advocate for accessibility, it shouldn't be left

to people with disabilities to have to lobby “every single municipality.”

Can you imagine, Madam Speaker, people who have mobility challenges and who want to speak to each municipality have to go lobby and actually visit them? I want to bring those municipalities here to Queen's Park or to meetings around the province, and have the accessibility groups come and meet with the municipalities to hear from the municipalities why they have to have a different rule than every other municipality in their area.

Let's start with Toronto and all of the municipalities that touch Toronto, and work our way out, because it's the GTHA. York region itself has so many municipalities, and if we can't even get the GTHA to work like a community and do what's good for the people in the community who need our support, then we're doing something very wrong here and it's extremely disappointing.

I want to mention quickly that I visited Sunrise Medical and Reg McClellan from 49 Bespoke, and they gave me a fantastic tour. I invite everybody to come up to my riding to see the wheelchairs and scooters and how they are made and maintained, because that's the big challenge: maintaining them.

Thank you, everybody, for your comments.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will deal first with ballot number 36, standing in the name of Mr. Walker.

Mr. Walker has moved private member's notice of motion number 72. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? The motion is now carried.

Motion agreed to.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (NUMBER PLATES AND CARRYING RACKS), 2016 LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (PLAQUES D'IMMATRICULATION ET SUPPORTS DE TRANSPORT)

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, has moved second reading of Bill 191, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to number plates and carrying racks.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is now carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to the standing orders, the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole. The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka?

Mr. Norm Miller: Justice policy committee, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I hear that the member would like to refer the bill to the justice policy committee. Agreed? Agreed.

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ACCESSIBLE PARKING IN MUNICIPALITIES ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 CONCERNANT LA COMMISSION D'ENQUÊTE SUR LE STATIONNEMENT ACCESSIBLE DANS LES MUNICIPALITÉS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mrs. Martow has moved second reading of Bill 187, An Act to establish a commission of inquiry into accessibility parking in municipalities.

Is the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to the standing orders, the bill is now referred to the Committee of the Whole.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Justice policy committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The bill is to go to justice policy committee. Agreed? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN ACT (STRENGTHENING RETIREMENT SECURITY FOR ONTARIANS), 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE RÉGIME DE RETRAITE DE LA PROVINCE DE L'ONTARIO (SÉCURISER LA RETRAITE EN ONTARIO)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 3, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 186, An Act to establish the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan / Projet de loi 186, Loi établissant le Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 5, 2016, I'm now required to put the question:

Mr. Bradley has moved second reading of Bill 186, An Act to establish the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The vote has been deferred: “Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on second reading of

the Bill 186 be deferred until deferred votes on Monday, May 9, 2016.”

Second reading vote deferred.

ALTERNATIVE FINANCIAL SERVICES
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
CONCERNANT LES SERVICES
FINANCIERS DE RECHANGE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 3, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 156, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to financial services / Projet de loi 156, Loi modifiant diverses lois concernant les services financiers.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to Bill 156, the Alternative Financial Services Statute Law Amendment Act. I think that there has been previous discussion about this piece of legislation. There is a concern in our discussions that some of the legislation is incomplete, and we look forward to further amendments that can be made.

It does include limits and guideline regulations that ensure certain fees and penalties are applied to stop obsessive overuse that traps those individuals finding themselves caught in the continual cycle known as the “debt trap.”

This reminds me of the kind of no-win situation that was the case for people back in the 18th century. There were frequently debts created by gambling, but the person would be unable to pay their debt, and so then they would find themselves in debtors' prison. In the situation of being unable to be in any gainful employment, obviously you would never get out of debtors' prison. That's the version a couple of hundred years ago, where people were locked away with no hope of being able to pay off their debts.

1610

The debt trap that we are talking about in this bill is obviously the limitation on what has prompted people to seek the payday loan. What happens there, then, is that if it is a stopgap and a way to be able to keep the roof over the head for the month, then it works, it happens, but it obviously creates that trap. There are many reasons for that, some of which I will make reference to in the few moments that I have.

There are certainly a growing number of Ontarians who find themselves unable to meet their bills and meet those payments that are required, so they take that step into borrowing through the payday loan system. The danger is, of course, that what drove them to need it in the beginning now becomes a cyclic thing. Now the next time they need to meet payment schedules, they find themselves in that situation.

Certainly, as an MPP, I see the effects of higher and higher costs—like the hydro costs, just to name one, but

also increases in the cost of living and food and rent and gas and things like that. These things combine and obviously make it more difficult for people to pay the fuel bills, the gas, the hydro, food and things like that.

There's now a problem that people are having to make tough decisions. Sometimes these decisions include making a choice as to which bills get paid on time and how to make ends meet. Not all of us are fortunate enough to have the luxury of walking into a bank or calling up a family member for a short-term loan. Some individuals are forced to face these rising costs and bills alone. Certainly we hear from those people in our ridings. That's one avenue of the problem.

Another area that the bill alludes to is of course the need for a much better financial literacy level amongst the population as a whole, so that people would see the payday loan system as something that wasn't designed for that purpose; it was designed for the need to be able to cash a cheque when sometimes banks take 10 or 12 days to process a cheque. The limits of financial literacy that too many of our citizens suffer from mean that they see this as a quick opportunity to do some financial management.

I know in my riding I've had businesses tell me that they are trying to make contractual arrangements with people who have declared bankruptcy and who have no idea of the impact that that “bankrupt” cloud has over them for a few years, so that they can't just walk into a car dealer and choose the car they want and assume there will be credit available for them.

The financial world has become much more complicated than it was years ago. Even the banks I've mentioned have time frames that they have to follow, and I think that it's important to understand that while we're talking about the payday loans and things like that, we put the banks in the context of their historical role.

Throughout history, we see the evolution of banking and its services, and the different products it offers now. Since the mid-1970s, we've seen the growth of a middle class, to now allow families enough money to begin thinking about personal finance, rather than making it to payday. I think that's a very important goal.

Banks were originally used as a safe haven to protect you through your travels. Now we've seen the advent of convenience banking, from online accounts to debit and credit cards. These systems have evolved to often become taken for granted, as it isn't obvious to the consumer the extensive cost and security devoted to these systems. It is for these reasons we see the requirements of minimum balances and high fees.

I think that I've got to circle back to this lack of understanding—the importance of people recognizing things like interest rates and how a store can advertise a level of interest rate, and how an interest rate can be misinterpreted: Is it annual or is it more frequently, than that? There are so many demands that people need to make. At the same time, advertising makes it look like it's painless and easy. It's the never-never plan. There seems to be a wide gulf in the way that people understand

this. I know, for instance, of families that operate on the basis—their financial operation is, “Which bill will we pay this month?” So there’s a permanent state of indebtedness and a permanent state of not being able to get out of that.

Payday loans are typically short-term loans of less than \$500 that are repaid in a lump sum and made in exchange for a postdated cheque or pre-authorized debit. It’s difficult to have exact figures on this, but it is estimated that approximately 3% of Ontarians took out a payday loan in the last 12 months. They’re generally catered to individuals who are unable to access traditional sources of credit.

Now, the government, aside from this piece of legislation, has set up a group of people to examine this process. This is not public at this time. It obviously limits the opportunity for a more fulsome discussion—if we had that information from the government at this time.

Obviously, there is a great deal of learning to be done, of understanding by the general public—and not be drawn into the easy advertising that suggests you can make a deal anytime, anywhere.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I respectfully recognize the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: It’s a pleasure to stand in the House today and respond to the member from York–Simcoe and her remarks regarding Bill 156, the Alternative Financial Services Statute Law Amendment Act.

I listened intently to her remarks, and they focused on financial literacy in large part, and it is something that’s missing in our current society. A lot of our younger people don’t understand it. To compound that, what she also talked about is how society in general is pushing people to borrow.

She mentioned advertising. When they advertise—they went to bi-weekly car payments to make them look smaller, and then weekly car payments, and there are certain cars you can buy for a coffee and a doughnut per day. It’s no secret what these people are trying to do: They’re trying to make things look attainable when maybe they really shouldn’t be. I don’t think it’s the real issue behind the payday loan problem, but it’s the same issue as, “Buy furniture now and pay 18 months later.” Well, for a lot of people, the couch is half worn out; you don’t feel like paying for it 18 months later. But you can have it now. We’re in a “you can have it now” society. I think that’s what the member was focusing on. It is a big issue where we have to make sure our younger generations know that at the end of the day, you have to pay your bills. If you don’t pay your bills, then bad things happen, and a lot of people don’t appreciate that. Close people in my family had to learn the hard way. Another member said that your credit card limit isn’t something you have to spend. On that I would like to end my remarks.

1620

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Chris Ballard: I think it’s really important to spend a couple of minutes on this and respond to the member from York–Simcoe. She raised some important issues that are perhaps outside the scope of the bill, but I agree with her, and I agree with the member of the third party. When we talk about consumer literacy or financial literacy, absolutely—it’s perhaps more than financial literacy; really, it’s consumer literacy. We seem to have moved into a world that is very consumerist-oriented and in need of immediate satisfaction of whatever we want. But for a significant number of people, it’s not a “buy now.” They definitely need the services that these institutions offer them. I’m so glad to see that Bill 156 will address a number of key ones.

Let me, if I may, Mr. Speaker, just touch on a few of the important things that the bill will address, from a consumer’s perspective. Those consumers who have a debt in collections will benefit from the new debt collection rules that apply more broadly, including applying them to debt purchases. Consumers cashing government cheques at alternative financial service providers would have more information and may benefit from a cap on the rate of cheque-cashing services. I’ve heard this quite frequently across Ontario, that sometimes those people, those vulnerable people, who receive a government cheque are unable to open up a bank account and cash it. They rely on these institutions which charge them too much. That should come to an end. Consumers using rent-to-own services should be better treated; instalment loans, payday loans and those who borrow repeatedly should enjoy better coverage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: I spoke about this at length the other day, and I think what I want to reiterate is the reality that we need these services for some people. Some people can’t find the normal practice of credit. They aren’t able to engage those services. So there is a valid need for this, sadly. What I was able to share—I’ve got feedback in my riding that there is more and more people needing these types of services, and a lot of that is because the cost of living for a lot of people is getting that much more expensive. People between paycheques are having a hard time. It’s being able to access—again, people new to our province sometimes haven’t got that established line of credit built yet or approved, so they need it. At the end of the day, we just have to always make sure that we think about the services that people truly need and do our best to provide those.

My colleague did a great job of outlining this, and our critic, Jim McDonnell from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, spent an hour putting the outline together, putting a lot of valid points on the table. My colleague from York–Simcoe did a great job as well of bringing some valid points, and a number of my other colleagues are going to bring more of those.

I think what I really want to leave the audience that’s listening and watching at home with is the reality, again, that these types of services, sadly, are becoming more

needed. We're hearing that there's an increase in food banks. A lot of people are having to make choices in how they actually pay their bills. There's not an abundance for a lot of people in the bank at the end of the day, and they need to have short-term access to be able to do these types of things. We all, sadly, run into occasions where we are struggling, where we don't have the ability to have all the cash in the bank, so we have to make arrangements to be able to have short-term access to be able to pay our bills. To pay our food bill versus our hydro bill is one of the things we certainly hear in this Legislature on an almost daily basis; the people who are struggling, particularly those in need, trying to understand how they pay their bills. I think this is a valid service, and we have to be very cautious, going forward, to make sure that these types of services are accessible for those in need.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I recognize the member from Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The member from York—Simcoe did an excellent job, of course, in outlining this bill, but here's the point: How many people in this House would walk into a bank or actually apply for a credit card, and the representative told them they were going to be paying somewhere in the order of 550% interest—how many in this House would actually stay for more than a nanosecond before running to the door, I would think with your hair on fire at that point? And 550% interest is what payday lenders are actually charging. To make one thing perfectly clear, \$21 per \$100 is not 21% interest. That is over a two-week period. If you annualize that, it's in the mid-500s. That is the interest rate they're charging.

There used to be a usury law in Canada that capped interest rates at 60%. Again, I think that if anybody offered you 60%, you should run screaming from that bank or that credit card company. But people don't get it; they don't see what's happening. These are the very institutions that prey upon those who are desperate because, quite frankly, the only people who would borrow any amount of money at 550% interest are the same people who used to go to Vinnie down at the bar, who broke your legs if you didn't pay him back. I know that some of my distant relatives in the past had that experience.

Here we have a legalized form of the same thing. Instead of Vinnie down at the bar who would break your legs if you didn't pay him back, you have somebody across the street from your house—by the way, probably across the street from your house if you're in the one of the poorer neighbourhoods—and they'll charge you 550% interest.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): I return to the honourable member from York—Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I want to thank all the members who participated: the members for Timiskaming—Cochrane, Newmarket—Aurora, Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound and Parkdale—High Park.

I think we all share the same concerns in terms of the importance of this legislation to be seen from the consumer perspective. Again, the need to provide better

consumer literacy, which the member for Newmarket—Aurora mentioned, is very important. It has to be done as a bit of an antidote to the manner in which savings and purchasing and money are presented in a way to attract you to spend more without thinking about the limitations of interest and the cost of doing this. I think that is perhaps where the consumer protection element comes into this as well.

Look at that advertising. Is it responsible in the manner in which it presents itself? And \$21 for \$100 is pretty questionable on that scale.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Shafiq Qaadri): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Before I begin, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I should explain to anybody watching why I'm wearing a chupa. I'm wearing this chupa—that's what it's called—because today was Tibet day. We had a wonderful luncheon here, for those who partook of it, and celebrated Tibetan culture and their struggle for freedom in their homeland as well. I just wanted to put that out there.

Now, to get to the government bill, which really is a set of promises for further consultation, let's look at a little bit of the history of payday lending in this province. As I was saying in my comments about the member from York—Simcoe's comments, this started as a federal criminal law: Any interest charged over 60% was considered usurious; that was the law. The Harper government, in their wisdom, downloaded the responsibility for taking care of usurious interest rates to the province. After I was first elected back in 2006, it was the Wild West for a while here in Ontario, and people were charging anything and everything. Payday lenders sprang up like mushrooms in the poorest districts across our city, preying on the poorest people, and interest rates were hovering around 800% to 1,000%. It was at that time that I tabled a bill modeled on the Quebec bill—which is law in Quebec—to cap interest rates at 35%.

1630

Now, even at 35%—I think many in this House have mortgages. Knowing that the mortgage interest rates are hovering between 2% and 4% for most people—I mean, think about it. There's a big gap between 35% and even the highest interest rates charged by credit card companies, which are in themselves, arguably, out of line, in the high 20% to 30% range. But 35% is the law in Quebec. At 35%, with that law in Quebec, there are no payday lenders. They don't have the blight we have here in Ontario. They have no payday lenders.

Now, it gets complicated because since I tabled that bill with the huge support of the Toronto Star, which ran an editorial supporting my bill, and ACORN, a phenomenal group—by the way, anybody from ACORN listening, kudos to you for taking this on. They have made this one of their seminal issues. Since tabling that bill, guess what's happened? The world of commerce being what it is, even in Quebec, the whole move to payday lending has moved online. So now, even though they have capped interest rates at 35% in the province of Quebec,

that doesn't stop somebody from going online, getting rollover and back-to-back loans at, again, 550% or more in real dollars and cents.

Part of the problem with payday lenders is that they know their audience. They pretend that their audience is just people like we are: middle-class people in Ontario. That's not who is taking out payday loans, I'm afraid to say, as somebody who stood in a demonstration outside with them back when my bill was live. The people who are walking in and out of payday lenders are those who earn the least, those who are the most marginalized, those who are the most vulnerable, those who are too desperate because they have to feed their children or they have to pay their rent. It doesn't matter what the small print says. It doesn't matter that we now—since my bill and since the pressure on the government in 2009, they limited to \$21. Again, limited to only 550% interest, not 800% to 1,000%, and they also put in the real interest rates and information. But people who are desperate don't read that information.

Concurrently with the payday lending movement, what also was happening was the recognition that people who cannot get credit—who have a bad credit history or who can't get a loan or an overdraft at their bank anymore—may need to borrow. But they don't need to be put further in debt by payday lenders; they may need something called a microloan. Microloans are what people who live on low incomes occasionally need. ACORN and other anti-poverty groups recognize that.

Actually, to their credit, some banks stepped up. I remember doing a whole long investigation with one of our banks that set up an outlet where they didn't ask for the normal ID and where they did extend what could really be called microloans. Guess what happened? That outlet closed and guess what it is now? A pawn shop on Queen Street in my riding, next door to a payday lender. The banks not only didn't follow through on that, but guess what? The banks also are now invested in payday lending because they know where profit is and where profit is to be made. How could you not make a profit at 550% interest?

So what do we need? What we need is not in this bill. This is a consultation document. What we need is political will around this issue. What we need is a government with a backbone, that's really, really willing to do something for those who are marginalized. I can tell you, there isn't a financial planner in the world—not in the world—who will advise their client to go to a payday lender or not advise their client to get out of payday loans as quickly as they can. That is sound financial advice. There is no other sound financial advice when it comes to payday lenders, any more than there would be sound financial advice about Vinnie down at the bar who would break your knees if you went to him, and he's a loan shark. No financial adviser is going to advise you to go to a payday lender. Clearly they're a blight on our neighbourhoods. There are moves at city council to make sure there are not too many of them all clustered around the poorest of the poor. In fact, they've set up in my neigh-

bourhood, right across from drop-in centres, where people on social assistance go to get meals. They know their target, and it's merciless; absolutely merciless.

So what do we need? First of all, what we need is to say, like Quebec did, that anything over 35% is usurious. Please—come on. That, we could do; that's what we should do. It's not enough anymore. Now we need to look at online lending. I have to tell you, there are jurisdictions around the world that are way, way ahead of us on this, Madam Speaker. There are jurisdictions, like in Florida and in fact in most of the states now, where you have real data—which the payday lending institutions are fighting against—real data tracked online, so if you go online and you try to do rollover loans, you try to borrow from here and then borrow from there and, of course, dig yourself deeper and deeper into debt in a way that you will never, ever get out—if you are to do that, we can track you and we can legislate around it. That software exists; that ability exists. Many of the states are doing it. We should be doing it here too.

A two-pronged event: Stop usurious interest charges. Please, don't tell me they can't make money at 35% interest. Really? So stop that. Number two: Look at the online aspect of payday lending and at least be able to regulate that, as many south of the border do.

This is what needs to be done. It's not rocket science. It has been asked for for almost a decade by those who are in anti-poverty groups, such as great organizations like ACORN. But there's no political will here to do it. We could talk about who gives money to which party, Madam Speaker, in terms of why there isn't the political will to really get at this issue, but I won't go there. I don't even need to go there. I just need to talk about ethics, morals. In what world is it ethically or morally right for someone who is one of the most marginalized persons—because, you remember, they're the only people who go in there. Nobody who could borrow money on their credit card or borrow money on a credit line or do an overdraft—none of those people would go to a payday lender if they knew one iota about them. What they prey upon is those who are so desperate they have nowhere else to turn. Those are who they're preying on. They're charging them 550% interest. Tell me in what world that's ethical, in what world that's not usurious, in what world that shouldn't be criminal. It was criminal in this country.

This government doesn't think it's criminal. This government thinks it's okay: "We'll just tweak around the edges a little bit. Five hundred and fifty per cent interest? Go for it, and build more payday lenders everywhere in our neighbourhoods."

I can tell you, that's not what the people of Parkdale-High Park think. That's not what the people I speak to in Ontario think. That's not what any of the anti-poverty groups thinks. If this government was serious about anti-poverty, they would be looking at this issue too. So what do we do? Criminalize them, Madam Speaker. That's what we should do.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I am going to comment briefly on the comments made by the member from Parkdale–High Park. I think she was very passionate when she spoke about this bill today. The good thing about second reading, which we're doing right now, is that after this debate goes on, hopefully it moves to a committee where there's going to be proper consultation, proper time spent to allow groups like ACORN to come in and make presentations to the committee and recommend proposed changes to this bill. I hope they do. I've been on many committees through the years and I find that oftentimes amendments are made to bills, if that's required.

The bill in front of us today is, again, to protect consumers regarding their financial rights when they go to get payday loans and other financial services. Our government had already consulted and brought forward this bill. It has various sections in it that deal with these high-debt companies that go out and say, "We'll give you a payday loan." Instantly, my sense is that something is wrong, but in various parts of Toronto—and I have some high-needs communities in my riding—people are living basically from paycheque to paycheque. They need to survive.

1640

I keep saying this point again and again. In my riding, I've learned that people will pay for their accommodations first, and the second most important thing, if they need food, they'll go to the food bank. But they want to live in their home. If they're living on a minimum wage and they need some money, they can be lured into some of these places.

Our government has tried to provide more information to people and more protection to them. Now, whether or not we go as far as to what Quebec had to do, that's something that could be discussed at committee.

She had some very important points to make. I'm glad that she made them and I look forward to this debate continuing and going to committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm very pleased to be able to put in my two cents in response to my colleague from Parkdale–High Park and to comment on Bill 156, the Alternative Financial Services Statute Law Amendment Act.

I would also like to thank her and applaud her for the work that she's done on this issue through the years. When I had prepared for the 20-minute speech that I gave a week or so ago, I looked back through Hansard and I learned a lot about how far we have needed to come on this issue, and now I realize how much further we still have yet to go.

When we talk about our communities and those who are struggling within them, people across our communities struggle, those who live in neighbourhoods you wouldn't often expect to be struggling financially. We've talked about that, driving through a neighbourhood with homes where you think that those who are living in them

probably have an easier time of it, perhaps, than in other neighbourhoods. But we realize that people are struggling so much under the weight of daily life and the cost of living that many are house-poor, many are turning to our food banks and many are turning to alternative financial services, which I think is a really pretty euphemism for loan sharks. But they're turning to payday loans, as well.

Historically, we've seen these lending agencies and loan sharks pop up in areas where they are targeting those who are disadvantaged, those who are struggling more obviously. But we're seeing that this is a business, this is an industry that is just sneaking its way into all of the different parts of our community and preying on struggle everywhere that they can. I think that it is really important for us to recognize that this is not an industry we want to grow. We don't want our food banks to continue having more people coming in. We need to stop struggle expanding and we need to strengthen our communities. We have an opportunity here.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments? I recognize the member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker. It's always a pleasure to be recognized in this House.

I'm delighted to have an opportunity to speak to the comments from the member from Parkdale–High Park. Her continued advocacy for those less fortunate than the rest of us is admirable, as it always is. And her passion for this issue continues on this, as she has on so many other issues.

This debate reminds me somewhat of the Popeye cartoon, Speaker; Popeye the Sailor Man, as you know. He had a sidekick named Wimpy, and Wimpy would often say, "I would gladly pay you Tuesday for a hamburger today." What if poor Wimpy had gone Tuesday to pay back for that hamburger and his costs had escalated dramatically? Because that's at the essence of what we're talking about here: People seeking food, seeking to make ends meet on limited resources are finding themselves having to go out to get that hamburger, only to find, when they come back on Tuesday to pay for it, that it's become unaffordable. So that's kind of the philosophy.

We are taking a look at this legislation in a way that we can regulate the kinds of financial services where people are targeting vulnerable people. It's not unlike door-to-door salespeople who are going out and finding vulnerable people to sell furnaces and HVACs to.

I think that our government is taking an extraordinarily responsible approach. Whether criminalization is the only answer—I'm not sure that our jails aren't full of criminals enough that this should be criminal, but certainly we should be regulating in a way.

I remember listening to the member from Niagara West–Glanbrook, who talked about, "There's an app for everything." Here's a circumstance where there are extraordinarily exorbitant prices being charged for financial services. I'll bet that there's an app, that we could develop an app that would allow people to get around

these payday loan people who are charging exorbitant fees, in order to give them a little—

Interjection.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Oh, there's a whole bunch I want to talk about. My mother-in-law does this great work, and Mike the café guy, but for that point I'll save that for another time.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm glad to add some comments to my colleague earlier on.

As part of my colleague from Beaches–East York's comments, there is an app for that. You thought of a great idea; the problem is, once you think of it, somebody already invented it. You've got to move fast. It's called Borrowell. In fact, our consumer technology caucus, which I co-chair with the member for Waterloo and the member for Cambridge, had Borrowell come in to talk to us about some of the new opportunities from technology. Borrowell is basically an online lending service that gives you a low-interest loan online. You do allow them to check your credit, obviously, but because they don't operate infrastructure and buildings, their costs are lower, and they have an algorithm to calculate the loan.

I actually applied for one to see what it was like, and within minutes of me saying, "Yes, you can look at my credit history," I was offered a loan at a low rate. I was a little worried they wouldn't give it to me, but they did. I didn't fulfill the deal; I was testing it out. But that's filling in the gap. I know that some credit unions, as well, are looking at the easy microloans at a lower interest rate. I'll talk about this in more detail later in debate, hopefully.

I know the assumption of many is that anybody who goes to get credit from a payday loan institution needs to be protected by government, or they're stupid and they're not making the right decision, but I'll argue the opposite: The vast majority are making rational decisions. The problem is, if you walk into your bank and say, "I need a \$200 loan for a week," they won't even talk to you, most of them, or they'll make you fill out all kinds of paperwork and come in next week. So they've filled a bit of a niche.

I agree, we need to have strong consumer protection standards and we have to have transparency in decision-making, but let's not automatically assume that we should close all these places down. Yes, there will be new technology solutions with this. I think the credit unions, like First Credit, are getting into this neighbourhood as well. But let's be very careful not to shut down what is a legitimate choice by a lot of rational, thinking individuals.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to return back to the member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you to everybody for weighing in on this.

And the member from Niagara—

Interjection: —West–Glanbrook.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: —West–Glanbrook, thank you—is quite right to say that credit unions are getting

involved, and they should, and we should have the ability to make microloans to people. There's no quarrel there.

Absolutely, I never said people are stupid; I said they're desperate when they go to payday lenders. They're not stupid. They know that they have to fill out lots of paperwork. They know their credit has been cut off. That's why they're driven to these places.

But I come back to the reality: Quebec still stands, Quebec still exists, and yet they have capped interest rates at 35%. It's doable. People do it. Other jurisdictions have done it. Guess what? Banks are still making money, lending institutions are still making money and credit card companies are still making money. They just don't have the blight of payday lenders in their poorer neighbourhoods.

They do have online borrowing, however, and that is a whole other area. Absolutely, there's an app for that. Absolutely, this is where this whole industry is moving. It can be tracked. The very fact is that the software exists to track rollover loans and who's applying, making sure people who are on social assistance are not among them etc. That software exists and is being used in American jurisdictions as we speak. That is a much more humane road to go, even if the interest is a little higher than I would like to see.

But 550% interest should not be allowed, and it wasn't allowed. It wasn't allowed under Conservative governments federally and it wasn't allowed under Liberal governments federally; it was criminalized. It was criminal. It's only now that it's not. Sitting at the dining room table with Diefenbaker fans and Tommy Douglas fans, as I grew up with, both would have agreed that 550% interest is morally wrong.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak to second reading of Bill 156. Knowing I was going to be speaking this afternoon, I was hoping that the House would be crowded. I'm concerned because I don't think there's a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Is a quorum present?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): A quorum is present.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): All right. I recognize the member again.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Thank you again, Madam Speaker, for bringing the members in to hear the debate this afternoon. I think this is an important debate on Bill 156, an Act to amend various Acts with respect to financial services.

1650

It was introduced in the Legislature before Christmas. On December 9, it received first reading, and it stands in the name of the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Of course, the government has led off the

debate with a number of lengthy speeches explaining the rationale and the purpose for this bill. We're told this bill is all about proposing changes to payday loans and debt collection—introducing legislation to strengthen consumer financial protection. That's what the government is telling us the bill is all about.

It's intended, according to the government, to increase protections for consumers who find it necessary to use what they call high-cost alternative financial services, which we commonly speak of as payday loans, instalment loans, rent-to-own services and cheque-cashing services, and to better protect Ontarians with respect to these debts that might be necessary to collect back.

If passed, the Alternative Financial Services Statute Law Amendment Act, the government tells us, would make amendments to the Payday Loans Act, the Consumer Protection Act and the Collection and Debt Settlement Services Act, increasing protection for consumers in several new ways, the government claims. They're suggesting that consumers cashing cheques at alternative financial service providers would have more information made available to them and would benefit from a cap on the rate of cheque-cashing services. The government is saying that people would have more information about the transactions that they're entering into voluntarily and that there would be a cap on the rate of cheque-cashing services so it wouldn't exceed a maximum amount.

The government says that consumers using rent-to-own services would benefit from a grace period for repayment, so people who enter into these contracts, I assume, would have a grace period before they have to resume paying back their obligation. Consumers using instalment loans would be certain that the cost of optimal insurance would not be excessive. Again, I think that commitment or statement by the government is subject to questions. How do we define "excessive"? That's certainly a subjective expression, I'm sure. To some people, "excessive" might mean something very different than other people might conclude.

Consumers who are repeat payday loan borrowers would have the option of a longer repayment period under this Bill 156, the government tells us. Consumers with overdue debts would apparently benefit from expanded rules against unfair collection practices from businesses that purchase and collect overdue debts.

Now, all of us would hope and expect that the government would introduce legislation to ensure that consumers have adequate protection with respect to payday loans and other alternative financial services, and it remains to be seen if indeed this bill is fully in the public interest. We expect and anticipate that as this debate concludes, the bill may very well, because the government has a majority, pass into law. We would anticipate and expect that it would be referred to a standing committee, hopefully for an opportunity for public hearing so that people who have an interest in this issue, as well as the organizations that are involved, would be able to come to a standing committee and express their views, ideas and concerns, perhaps, leading to amendments that

hopefully would strengthen the bill and improve it, and ensure that it is in the public interest.

Now, the government tells us that they've already consulted approximately, I believe, a thousand people, I saw in one of the documents here. I would say admittedly, if indeed that's true, that's fairly extensive consultation. But I think, still, when the bill—any piece of legislation—is introduced, often there's greater awareness that the government is moving forward with a serious proposal and, in many cases, it leads to additional interest from the general public. When we advertise about a bill for a standing committee, it usually leads to considerable interest from groups and individuals and, of course as we know, they participate in public hearings, if indeed those are offered by the government.

Again, this bill was introduced, and apparently the government says they're continuing to seek more public input on this issue, broadly speaking. There is a news release that was sent out just last month, April 20, where the government claims to be seeking more public input on how much borrowers should pay for a payday loan in the province. I would suggest that the government continue to consult on this important issue, to ensure that the end result is positive and in the best interests of the people of the province.

Our party's critic, the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, gave a one-hour leadoff speech on behalf of our caucus. He made some very important points. I had the opportunity to be here because I was in the chair that afternoon. It was a good speech, and I think it highlighted a number of the concerns that he has heard in his consultations as our party's credit critic and also from people across the province.

I know our caucus has a number of suggestions and concerns with respect to this bill. We believe that payday lending should be a last resort for consumers who have bad credit or no credit and who experience an unexpected expense or an unexpected drop in income. Not everyone would partake of the availability of payday loans. People who have a bank account, who perhaps have a line of credit account with a credit union or a bank, in most cases, I would suggest, probably are not customers or clients of companies that do payday loans—in all likelihood. But there is a segment of our population that do use these alternative financial services and, from time to time, do need them.

We believe this approach should not be meant as a regular source of funding. We want to ensure, though, that Ontarians who need these services continue to have access to them, including the cashing of cheques. We believe that not every recipient of a government cheque necessarily has a bank account and would need to have a means of being able to cash that government cheque if they don't have a bank account, so these payday loans organizations provide that means.

The payday lending industry, I'm told, strives to work with the government in order to create a set of consistent and fair rules that protect consumers and allow the industry to survive. I would hope that the industry is prepared to work with government, to work together to

establish a regulatory climate that is fair to all and ensures that the public interest is served.

Our party says that this bill, though, expands the reach of the government from rule-setting to micromanaging the industry in some respects. Certainly we would want to call attention to that issue. I'm sure there's going to be further discussion of that issue at the standing committee and, hopefully, there may be some opportunity for amendments to respond to that concern.

People who have only recently arrived in Canada or who have experienced negative credit events, such as bankruptcy, missed payments or a consumer proposal, might find it difficult to access extra funds, if needed. We would say that this government should be dedicating more energy to appropriate credit and financial literacy amongst the general consumer population rather than micromanaging the sector, hoping that that will solve the problem. I would agree with that, Madam Speaker. I think there is a great need for opportunities for some Ontarians to enhance their financial literacy and have a greater understanding of the implications of some of their financial decisions.

But at the same time, we see a provincial government that has allowed the provincial debt to more than double during its tenure in office, going back to 2003. I believe the provincial debt now stands at \$308 billion. The interest cost on that debt on an annual basis is now the third-highest provincial government expenditure, only behind health and education. We are the largest sub-national debtor in the world. If we see a provincial government that is spending beyond its means, borrowing the difference, year after year after year, doubling the provincial debt, it's not surprising that there are some Ontario residents who are struggling day to day to live within their means, month to month and, in some cases, in need of these payday loans.

1700

Earlier this year, I worked with my riding office staff to develop a petition on hydro rates. I want to put that on the record just at the end of my remarks, of course. Because, as of May 1, we experienced yet another hydro rate increase. We have to be concerned about that because it's costing hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs, or at least contributing to the loss of those jobs. At the same time, many consumers are struggling to pay their hydro bills. There are a lot of concerns about the cost of living, and this is one of them. I would encourage the government to consider that concern as well in the context of the debate on Bill 156.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in the House today and follow the member from Wellington-Halton Hills and his remarks on, basically, the payday loan act.

I would like to commend the member. I don't always agree with his arguments, but they're always reasoned and well laid out. He is, in my opinion, one of the pillars of political debate here.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, because he's always reasoned. He brought up the point—and I'm going to comment on what he said—of the provincial debt. That is a big problem because if they keep going this way, they're going to need a payday loan—

Hon. Michael Coteau: You guys doubled the debt. You both doubled the debt.

Mr. John Vanthof: No. If you look at the overall economy, you keep going—

Hon. Michael Coteau: You both doubled the debt.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I want to remind the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport that there is no crossover talking.

Can we stop the clock?

Can we make sure that we don't crosstalk? I want to respect everybody's opportunity. I'm going to return to the member.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's actually quite an honour to be heckled by the Minister of Tourism and Culture.

But the one thing about people who go to payday loan places is that, in many cases, they don't have a choice, and that's very sad. Later in my 10 minutes, I'll expand on that. But they don't have a choice because, quite frankly, they can't get a loan from the bank and they might not have the credit history, and that is a huge problem. We have to be very cognizant that they are a lender of last resort. We have to make sure that the trick to helping is to make sure that people don't have to go to a lender of last resort. They're popping up to fill a void. It's a void that we have to look beyond and see how we can fix the problems behind that, so they're not forced to go to a lender of last resort.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I thank the member from Wellington-Halton Hills for his comments.

I know that in my riding—in half of my riding, anyway—on almost every corner there's a "cash money/free cash" store. All over the place, they're popping up. They have been there for the last decade or so. That's the reality, I think, of Toronto and the reality of Ontario and the reality in my riding. There are two solitudes: There are people who are doing very well and they can't believe house prices—the average detached house is now going for \$1 million—and, meanwhile, there are people who can't really find enough money to pay for their food. That's why these payday loans have sort of popped up.

I think that the key is to try and get our banks and financial institutions to be more friendly to ordinary working people and not just to be catering to people with a lot of money, so they won't have to use these payday loans because it is expensive for them but they don't have any other choice. It would be wonderful to see that our banks made it reasonable for people to come and use the bank. But no; it is very difficult. And God help you if you get stuck in one of these credit rating agency circles where people of all different levels of education can never find out what these credit rating agencies really do and how they rate you. You can imagine a poor working

person who maybe doesn't speak English trying to deal with a credit rating agency. That's another thing we should try and maybe fix: these credit rating agencies which condemn you to a life of credit rating agency hell.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to speak to this bill. My comments, the last time I spoke on this bill—it was amazing. I had a visit from a couple of people in the industry who came and wanted to assure me that it wasn't what I said it was. I'd have to dig my remarks up. I probably won't repeat them again today. Anyway, it was amazing what this individual had to tell me about how a lot of people who have good, well-paying jobs were coming. It's not just, as I laid out that day and as I feel, that it was people who were down and out and, as some of the members have said, are up against it, who are their best customers. I made some comments about the festive season, so I won't repeat those again. They might have been a little over the top. It was getting late in the day when I said it.

My biggest concern is when this individual gave me an outline of what they charge—I think it was \$21 on \$100 to cash a cheque—and I said, "Why would anybody do that?" I did a little more digging, and it turns out it's some people who maybe have obligations to, say, FRO—to spouses. Eventually they have to pay, but there are obligations to people they owe money to, so they're trying to circumvent for a while, because I don't think it happens forever. What I said, as the member from Eglinton–Lawrence said—and I feel this and I'll say it again—was that I think there's an obligation on the Canadian banks, which make good money—we see it every month, at every quarter, the kinds of dollars they're making—and the credit unions to step forward.

We're working on an initiative in my riding where ODSP and Ontario Works cheques will be cashed at the credit unions. We haven't gotten quite that far with the banks yet, but that's something that I intend to pursue.

I look forward to the rest of the day here today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you to the member from Wellington–Halton Hills for his contributions to this debate on Bill 156.

I'd like to know, how did we get to this point that we are here as legislators regulating poverty and the charges that these payday loan institutions are allowed to impose on people who can't afford life? It's really kind of disturbing, to say the least. Why do people use payday loans? It's because they're at their lowest point financially and they're forced to go to these payday loan places and pay even more and be taken advantage of again financially. It really is disturbing that as a society we funnel people who live in poverty to payday loans that take advantage of them all over again financially. How does that make any sense? How did we get here today? We need to ask that question. We're legislating payday loans not to take advantage of people who can't afford life.

What I'd like to say about this situation is that we should find alternatives to payday loans, not regulate payday loans. Some of the alternatives are maybe the basic income that they're talking about federally and helping people that way. I recently read an article that post offices want to offer services for people who have government cheques. Apparently that was done years ago, and they're capable of doing that.

We need to find real alternatives that are going to help people, not continually prop up payday loans so that they can gouge people who have financial issues and problems and can't afford life.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to return back to the member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

1710

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to thank the members for Timiskaming–Cochrane, Eglinton–Lawrence, Sarnia–Lambton and London–Fanshawe for responding to my remarks this afternoon.

I specifically want to address what was raised by my colleague the member for Sarnia–Lambton, who I think has made some very good points in this debate and reiterated the need for the chartered banks and Ontario credit unions to ensure that all Ontarians have access to the financial services they need—basic financial services. He mentioned cheque cashing.

I commend him for the leadership he has shown in his riding, trying to bring people together. We, as legislators, sometimes don't fully appreciate the authority we have, by virtue of our election. But one of our greatest powers, actually, is the power to convene, to bring people together, to get them discussing an issue and get them talking about solutions. That's exactly the kind leadership that the member for Sarnia–Lambton is showing on this issue. He obviously demonstrates his concern for the low-income people of his riding, as well as those who, perhaps for other reasons, struggle to make ends meet from month to month because of other challenges. The fact is that we can all take a lesson from that and see what we can do, working with the local financial institutions in our ridings.

I would hope that the large financial institutions—the chartered banks, the credit unions—are monitoring this debate as well. I think this represents a challenge to them, too, and perhaps an opportunity as well. They need to do what they can to ensure that all Ontarians have access to the kinds of financial services that many of us take for granted.

Again, this discussion continues, and I look forward to debate from other members this afternoon and as the bill continues through the legislative process.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: I appreciate this opportunity to get a few remarks on the record regarding Bill 156, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to financial services, commonly known, I think, as the payday loan act.

Some other members have concentrated on their part of the world and how this has affected their part of the world. In my few minutes, I'm going to concentrate on my riding and the ridings around it in northern Ontario. We don't have as many payday loan places as down here—I have some—and we also have a lot less population. Perhaps the reasons that people—many of the reasons are the same, but some are perhaps different than here.

Many of the people I know who have to go to these lenders of last resort aren't necessarily in the lowest income bracket. They're not middle class, but they're gainfully employed. They budget, they're conscious of their financial position, but they are subject to huge fluctuations.

In northern Ontario, when the price of gas goes up—it's already high, and it goes up by 10 or 15 cents. People in other parts of the province say, "Why do these people drive cars? Why don't they take the bus to work?" Well, there is no bus. "Why don't they take the train to work?" There is no train. They have no other choice but to drive a car. So they are very much impacted by fluctuations in the price of gas.

It would be something like in this area. I live here six months a year while the Legislature is running. No one is going to dispute that people in this area have challenges; no one is going to dispute that. Can you imagine the challenges that people here would face if the price of public transit went up and down 25% on a two-weekly basis. Can you imagine how upset people here would be? Could you imagine? That's what people in the north face on a regular basis.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: A point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): A point of order, the associate minister.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'd ask the member opposite to speak to the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Hold the clock. I'm going to return to the member. I know the member is trying to stay on the bill. I return to the member.

Mr. John Vanthof: Speaker, just for the record, I'm speaking wholly to the bill, because we are looking at regulating payday loans, and the reason behind why there is a payday loan industry is very pertinent to this bill. How can you talk about the payday loan industry if you're unwilling to talk about what's actually causing this industry to flourish? In my part of the world, escalating costs are causing a need, for some people, for this industry—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Hydro is another one of those costs.

Mr. John Vanthof: —and the fluctuating price of gas is one of those.

My colleague mentioned hydro. If you look over the long term, people in an area like mine, where we suffer from, at times, severe winter temperatures, and we have to heat our homes, as people do here—but the climatic conditions are much more severe. Again, this winter, we

didn't really have a cold winter, but last winter, we had a consecutive month of minus 30 to minus 40 at night. I heat with wood, and I even noticed the difference that we used in wood. That big of a difference could cause someone to be forced to look for an immediate—they need an immediate cash injection.

In my constituency office, we've helped people who couldn't pay their hydro bill. They're looking at their options, and it was cheaper to go to a payday loan place than it was to have to pay a reconnection charge for your hydro. Is that even understandable? Can you even fathom that?

The government might not want to hear the reasons why people have to go to payday loans in other parts of the province, but they're there.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: We know the reasons.

Mr. John Vanthof: They're there.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Talk to the bill.

Mr. John Vanthof: We are talking to the bill. We are talking to the bill.

One of the problems why the payday loan is coming across the province is that it's really difficult to go to the bank and say, "I need a loan to pay the extra cost for my heat." That's one of the reasons why they're there.

I would like to commend the members of the official opposition who have said something that we truly believe in, that the chartered banks and the credit unions should step up to the plate and have some kind of loan process where you actually can get a reasonable term loan that you're going to pay back for unforeseen—not calamities, not like your house burns down. But there are people who can't pay the heating bill, depending on how cold the weather is, through no fault of their own at all. I think that would be a big step. I really hope the chartered banks are listening, and the credit unions are listening. Some of them are taking initial steps, and I hope they take more steps.

The payday loan sector is there. We should regulate them more stringently. But they're there for a reason: because people can't get the money in other places,

Really, for the necessities of life in my part of the world—and I stick to and I talk about my part of the world because that's who I represent—people have to go to a payday loan place for the necessities of life, because of circumstances totally beyond their control, like the fluctuation in the price of gas.

If you're used to travelling from A to B with a bus service that we used to have—it's gone. Again, train service that we used to have—you used to be able to go to a medical appointment in Toronto with the train. You used to have a night train where you could go down, come back and do your medical appointment and not have to pay for hotel bills. We used to have that. That's gone.

1720

Now if you need a medical appointment—yes, you get \$100 or \$100 and change for a travel grant, but it's a lot different for families living here when they need to go for serious medical care. It's still a huge burden. For people

who live close to Toronto, it's a hop, skip and a jump in relation to the rest of the province. There are parts of the province that are much farther away than where I live. Again, if you have a medical emergency in your family—in the private members' bills we talked about medical conditions. Well, those medical conditions could drive people so that they need an immediate infusion of cash, which they might not get anywhere else but a payday loan. If you're facing something like that, do you know what? You're not going to sit down and figure out the interest, and that's truly tragic: that there is no other utility and no other method where those people can access funds other than through a payday loan and through 21 bucks on the hundred. That's truly scary.

Even with this bill, you have to make sure that you look at the whole province and look at what is behind what's driving people to pay way too much for far too little.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Chris Ballard: Once again, it's my pleasure to be able to stand and comment on what the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane said in his thoughtful commentary.

Bill 156 is very important for a number of reasons. I, for many years, questioned the need for these facilities as well, but in doing my own research and talking to organizations across Ontario who deal with vulnerable consumers, what they were so worried about was that, with the growth of online lending, which crosses jurisdictional boundaries, we can have people lending money to vulnerable consumers in Ontario who aren't even based in Canada, for example, and we can't control that. They were worried about driving business to loan sharks who do not provide a level of service that many of these places do, to put it lightly. Those were just a couple of their concerns around the outright banning of these types of facilities.

I can tell you what a couple of organizations said, because they speak to what I believe, but I'd rather have their quotes say it. The United Way said, "While we believe that many of these services"—these are the payday lenders and alternative financial services—"may be causing harm to individuals, families and even to communities, until there are viable alternatives, for example, through the traditional banking and credit union sector, our communities tell us that they offer a necessary lifeline to many people who have no other options."

I heard that time and again across Ontario. I've got a couple of other quotes, but I'll leave it there for now, other than, these organizations need to be controlled. We need to protect vulnerable consumers. Bill 156 takes a giant step in doing that.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I want to commend the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane for his comments. I thought that that's why members came here and why they were elected from the ridings: to come to this honourable

place and be able to tell and relate stories from their ridings about their constituents. I think that's what the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane was doing. I think that's what a number of other members have done during this debate and some other debates.

I find it very objectionable for members of cabinet and parliamentary secretaries to continually rise and keep talking about people getting back to the debate. Talking about the bill is talking about people's experiences in their riding. That's what I was talking about. I'd like to know how many of the members on the other side actually have met with the people who run these payday loan organizations. I bet that probably none of them have been in the position themselves where they had to use one. That's another story.

I think the members should allow the debate to continue, and if the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane or if the member from another rural riding—

Mr. Bill Walker: Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Robert Bailey: —Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound wants to stand—and it's his time, that 10 minutes, if they want to elaborate on issues in their riding that are affecting their constituents and relate those stories. The transportation issue is a great big issue. There's no subway, there's no transit, in Timiskaming-Cochrane. There isn't any in Sarnia-Lambton either, or Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, which people can access if they do have medical appointments. There are people who would have to use these payday loans, and like I said, the onus, I think—if there's something the cabinet could do, and the parliamentary secretaries—they could call in the leaders of the major banks, the lending institutions, the credit unions, bring them in—you're always great at advocacy and conversation—and have that conversation—

Mr. Bill Walker: Tell them to bring their chequebooks with them.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Bring their chequebooks with them, and let's get this thing straightened out.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to weigh in on my colleague's presentation on Bill 156. The member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, as always, has presented a whole bunch of new information that I'm learning for the first time. I think that that is, as we've just heard, part of the magic of this place. We have the opportunity to learn from each other, and we're not just learning from each other; we're learning about each other's constituencies; we're learning about each other's communities. For the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to say, "Get back to it and speak to the bill," to stay on the issues—we are. We do bring voice to our communities, and I would say that that should be welcomed. This is a government that loves to shut down debate with time allocation, but I didn't know they got to dictate what it was we talked about.

Something that the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane had pointed out is that for those who use these services, whether it's payday loans or some of these

different alternative services, they have no other options. That seems to be a theme. Every time we have the opportunity to hear about what it's like living up north, we learn that there are fewer options up there. When we're talking about the cost of gas or access to health care, transit, the cost of living, hydro—and maybe the cost of electricity isn't more up north, but they use it for different things. When we talk about agricultural industries, there's far more—it does cost more, but they use it for more.

When you add all of that together and you look at just how hard-pressed our northern communities, our rural communities are to make ends meet, I don't know how they remain hopeful in a Liberal province. Maybe they would be able to come and present at committee, except that, as we've already heard and been reminded, they can't just hop on the train and come and present at committee, because they don't have those options.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to add my voice to this bill and to speak about my riding as well. More and more payday lenders are opening their doors in my riding. As the MPP from Eglinton—Lawrence pointed out earlier, they concentrate in particular neighbourhoods where the most disadvantaged people live, to the point that my local councillor, Frances Nunziata, recently presented a motion at city council that passed unanimously, tasking city staff with developing a bylaw and different options around minimum distances for predatory lending. We've also been working closely with ACORN, who hosted a fair banking forum in my riding.

I agree with the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane that other financial institutions should really step up. I do know that credit unions want to play a role and step in and offer some alternatives, but it would be great to get the banks, which I believe are under federal jurisdiction—I don't think we have too much control over them, but certainly we should try.

1730

I know that the Canadian postal workers, as well, are proposing the comeback of postal banking; that's very popular in other countries. We should look at all the different alternatives to make sure that we protect the consumers as much as possible.

That's what this bill intends to do in its own way. By making sure that people know their rights and that they know exactly what they are getting into—a lot of people, as you mentioned—I'm referring to the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane—don't at times know exactly what dealing with a payday lender entails.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return back to the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane to wrap up.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of the members who responded to my comments and who actually responded to my comments. It's refreshing. I'd really like to thank everybody who did that.

What I focused on was the bill, but to truly look at this problem you have to focus on also what's causing the people to go to payday loans. And yes, the banks and the credit unions—specifically the credit unions—are looking for ways to try and alleviate this, to try and fit a business model to help these people.

I'm going to close with another issue. It has been announced that the price of gas is going to go up five-point-something cents as part of the climate change initiative. It's a problem, but people in Ontario want to pay their part. But again, people in the north should also be part of the offset. When the government announced \$100 million for climatic retrofits to make your house more efficient, and it was done through Union Gas and Enbridge, I spoke in this House to say, "That takes out a lot of people who use propane." I was challenged by the President of the Treasury Board that, "No, no, everyone is accessible." I talked to the people who sell propane and oil in my riding, and no. So far, they don't have any access. Do you know how big a difference it would make for the climate, for carbon, if we could take oil furnaces out of people's houses and change them to propane? It would make a huge difference. But again, people in remote and rural—because where I live isn't remote—have been forgotten or left out because this program, as far as I can see, is only for gas customers. It would make a huge difference.

The government has got to look at other things to keep people out of the payday loan system.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to rise today to speak about this bill on payday loans—I believe it's Bill 156. I have it marked here. Hang on one second. It is. How's that for memory at the end of the day? Why doesn't it say it clearly here? It is an act that amends the Consumer Protection Act, the Collection and Debt Settlement Services Act and Payday Loans Act.

We held a very interesting meeting in our caucus boardroom with some of the investors and owners of payday loan establishments. It is unfortunate when you hear that people have to get a loan of any kind for a family emergency, whether it's at a bank or whether it's from a payday loan agency or from a credit union. The key difference is that, most often, banks and trust companies are dealing with people who are getting loans based on equity and using that for collateral. They're getting loans—it's almost like an investment when they get those loans, because they're using their equity—maybe the equity from their home or property that they own—to get some cash flow so that sometimes they can do improvements, which can be an investment, or invest in a business.

This is a big stretch from that. This is the opposite end of the spectrum. People who have to avail themselves of payday loan establishments are people who don't have equity to take to a bank. They don't have a rainy day fund, and they are stressed. I think that we have to look at the broad picture and realize how this type of stress that

people are living under day to day, wondering, when they open each bill—they're afraid to open their bills. They avoid opening their bills, which sometimes makes it even worse because then there are interest payments or reactivation fees. They're living under such incredible stress that it makes people turn to abuse of alcohol or drugs; it can make people violent; it can affect their children and other family members; it can affect their job performance at work; and it can affect their health as well.

It is very important for us to make sure that people are able to access what I call microloans. That's what these are. These are microloans. They're small loans that are only meant to be for two weeks. They're meant for family or personal emergencies.

As we are hearing from some of the members from rural ridings, people rely on their cars in those rural ridings. They have no other choice. You cannot walk to a store to buy a few groceries for your children if you are in those kinds of communities. So if their car has an unexpected flat tire, a lot of times you can imagine how stressful that is. They are well aware that some construction project is going on near them and when they get a nail in their tire they probably, rightly so, blame that construction project for their bad luck and now, all of a sudden, they need to get two tires for their vehicle.

We want people to be able to have that financial literacy, I would call it, and to understand how important it is to save in good times so that hopefully you don't need to rely on some kind of microloan or a payday loan situation.

We can't talk the talk unless we walk the walk. We are borrowing, in the province of Ontario, over \$11 billion a year to pay interest on our debt. I wish it was laughable. I wish I could laugh and say it was funny that we are hearing from members in the Legislature and members in our communities who somehow look down on people who borrow to make ends meet. We're doing the exact same thing.

I'm not blaming just this government. Other governments across Canada, across the world—municipalities are in debt. I'm in York region and I think the debt now has passed over \$3 billion. Maybe the member from Newmarket–Aurora can vouch for me. The York region administration is in debt. Many of the cities in York region are in debt. That means that the individuals in those cities are in debt and living in a really scary situation, for people who sit down and think of it. Unfortunately, most people don't take the time to think of it. Collectively, as a society, we all owe on those debts.

I remember during my last campaign a very clever guy—I can still picture him. He said he was in a rented house. He was an electrician. His name was Mike. It sort of reminds me of when Obama campaigned and there was Joe the Plumber or somebody who went around. We wondered if that was a set-up, but this is a true story. I spoke to him about government debt and the reason why I'm a financial conservative. I consider myself a fairly progressive Conservative but I am financially conserva-

tive and that debt bothers me. It's something I've always thought about: governments and debt.

He said to me, "Well, I don't own my house. I'll just move to Alberta," because at that time, things were still pretty good in Alberta and he figured he'd just pack up his family and get in his truck—he's an electrician—and he could get a job in Alberta. He was probably thinking about it at the time. Maybe his wife didn't want to move and maybe that was a struggle they were going through at that time.

But that's the mentality. People don't have equity. They don't own their house. They don't own their business. All they own are their skills and they own the shirt on their back and maybe their equipment, if they're an electrician. But people don't have that equity and it makes them very transferable. We see people who will move to another province because there's a better program for some kind of social services or disability.

This morning during question period, we heard somebody speak about autism therapy; that they are concerned autism therapy will not be available for their child and they will look at other provinces and consider moving to other provinces.

So if our debt is starting to affect the level of services, which I believe it is already, many people might have to consider moving to another province. That's a problem, Madam Speaker. That's not fair to Manitoba, who might be managing their books very well, to have all the families with autism or certain health problems all of a sudden move to their province. That means that we as legislators are not doing our job here at Queen's Park.

1740

So the people who go to payday loans are at a very low point. I think that they need to have access to payday loan institutions. I'm not speaking against the loan institutions; I'm speaking against people being forced to live hand to mouth, often even with a good-paying job. If their electricity rates are sky-rocketing, if they're having to pay for autism therapy for their child—I would wonder how many people are in debt in the province of Ontario because they're having to access services that, really, the government should be providing, but they're on a wait-list. I'd say, kudos, to those people who are willing to use their home equity and to invest in their children and to invest in their own health and to ensure that they are not going to be left behind.

I think that it really comes down—and we've heard a lot of people speak about it—to education: financial literacy and financial education. I have to say, I still remember being in about grade 10. We had home economics for a couple of months, and different types of courses like that that many of the high schools don't have any more. In one of the courses, we had to learn how to write a cheque, which I had not done until then; we had to learn how to reconcile our bank statement; and we learned about credit cards, interest, compounded interest and what it all meant. I actually found it very interesting at the time.

I remember, I did very well in the exam, except I lost marks because I didn't spell "cheque" with Q-U-E; I

spelled it C-K. To this day, I have to tell people here that whenever I see somebody write the word “check” when they mean “to write a cheque to the bank” with a C-K, I’m outraged, because I say, “I lost marks for that, and you should lose marks for that as well.”

I think that all of us here understand what compounded interest is. We understand that payday loans are meant as microloans for two weeks, without compounded interest. Yes, it might sound like a very small amount—\$21 on \$100—but that’s 21%. I think that that sort of financial literacy—it’s our job to ensure that the schools are teaching it. But we also understand that there are many people who are intellectually challenged in our community, or who may be developing dementia and their family members and friends don’t even realize it yet. They’re taking out loans that really they shouldn’t be. That’s a big challenge for us here in the province, because you want people to have their privacy and autonomy, but then there can be problems associated with that.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I’m glad to rise again and add further comments on Bill 156, the Alternative Financial Services Statute Law Amendment Act.

To make comments in response to the member from Thornhill, who tied many pieces into this issue—you know, we’re talking about alternative financial services, but it isn’t just those services; it’s who needs to use them, who feels that they have no choice but to use them, from all across the communities. Earlier I was commenting on the member who has spoken about northern communities and what payday loans and these facilities are like there. But really, through our communities, we have stories that we need to be recognizing.

I’m reminded of something I talked about the other day. We had a group that put on an Amazing Race to the Bottom, which was an obstacle course in my constituency office parking lot. It sort of—it didn’t make light of it, but was a clever approach to point out that people had to juggle child care and race to pay the rent and carry the weight of the necessities of life. It was an obstacle course that pointed out and highlighted the different challenges that people face. I’m thinking now that we missed an obstacle in this: when there is no money, when it isn’t just an obstacle to overcome, when you have hit a wall and there is nowhere to go. When you cannot climb that wall and you cannot go around it, what on earth do you do?

The fact that so many people are forced into these establishments, forced to use a loan shark, forced to put themselves in this cycle—to the member’s point, she was talking about microloans and that idea that it’s intended to be short-term, to get you from one paycheque to the next or from one obstacle to the next. But really, we see that it is a cycle people can’t get out of.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: It’s of course a duty and a privilege to rise to speak on Bill 156, the Alternative Financial Services Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015.

I’ll just share with you perhaps a small incident in which I think folks who use payday loans—like my own children, who are studying the mathematics of compound interest—one day wake up and see their negative power. One of the things that we perhaps don’t really realize is that the individuals who are forced to use these loans—which, yes, have been called “micro,” but tend to become macro and chronic in duration, long-term. Therein lie the challenge, the difficulty and the trials and tribulations, because what should be a two-week, four-week or six-week endeavour alone, as you know, Speaker, cycles upon itself, and then—as my kids realized one fine day, “Daddy, this is what compound interest does”—there is therefore interest on interest. That’s where the debt trap occurs, as has been mentioned.

It’s in order to regulate that, in order to make sure that the interest rates that are charged, whether hidden, explicit or annualized, are more in conformity with what official or proper financial practices are, as well as, for example, instituting things like grace periods for collections and in general helping individuals who, yes, may legitimately require these types of bridge financing or bridge loans—I think probably we might want to call it that, as opposed to microloans. “Microloans” has a different connotation being used globally, by the way, in other parts of the world, as Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus will tell you.

In any case, this is an important issue. We cannot outright ban it; it’s still a valid need to be serving in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: I’m just going to borrow a little bit of the comments just made by the member from Etobicoke North, talking a lot about interest. I really hope that at the end of the day all of his colleagues will start thinking more about interest, because every day that I stand in this House, I talk about the \$11 billion in interest that that government spends on just their debt.

You can relate it back to this bill, where there is a need for lending services—short-term, in this case. You’re hopeful that people only need this in short-term bursts; it’s only intended for a two-week period. However, the model that this government is setting is encouraging people to borrow and borrow, as they are. They are addicted to overspending, and that’s making it tougher for other people.

Energy rates have quadrupled, and people are now having to struggle to truly pay their bills. A lot of people in our rural ridings, as a number of folks here have said today, are really struggling with what bill they pay and where they juggle the cash. They don’t have unending amounts of money in the bank. Some people—many people—are living paycheque to paycheque. When these rates go up—we just had another hydro rate increase on May 1, Madam Speaker. It’s getting more and more difficult for a lot of people out there to live, so they need access to these types of services, and they need them when they can.

I'm hopeful that this government will really step back. If they're intent on putting this type of legislation through, maybe they should look in the mirror a little bit and say, "Should we be continuing to borrow beyond our means? Should we be putting those pages sitting in front of you in a precarious position where they're perhaps never going to get out of debt?" Every single child in this province is born into \$21,000 of debt the day they enter our great province.

Debt is a big thing. Understanding debt and understanding how to manage it, as the member said, is very critical. But I hope this government actually takes some education as well so that we can get out of this debt spiral that they continue to follow down.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always a pleasure to rise in this House, particularly after the member from Thornhill, to offer a few comments on her wise exposition of the situation in Ontario, which is pretty horrendous in terms of debt load; no question about that.

It's interesting because, while she was speaking, I was googling—you know, that great research opportunity we all have. Just in terms of financial literacy and the situation of Canadians, our personal debt has grown by about 64% over the last decade that now the average Canadian owes 163% of their disposable income. We're all in debt in a way that our parent's generation would have been horrified by.

1750

One can only imagine, with interest rates as low as they are right now, what happens if the inevitable happens and they come up a little bit. I always look at all those young people buying condos—those few who could afford it, because in downtown Toronto it's very difficult for anybody to buy anything anymore. But if the interest rates go up, and you think of all those young people who have invested and won't be able to keep up with their payments, particularly as jobs flow from this province—she went over that in, I think, pretty interesting detail.

I'll just come back to my main point. Yes, I don't have a problem with microloans. I think that we need more microloans. What we have a problem with is the interest rate charged at 550% and the fact that, even with this bill, that situation remains. Let's hope that the government, in their consultations, especially with groups like ACORN, finally does something about the elephant in the room, which is the actual interest rate charged by payday lenders, which, as I said, should be illegal.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return back to the member from Thornhill to wrap up.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I think that it's often very scary for people to talk about money. People don't like to talk with their relatives or their friends. People don't really know sometimes, and they're shocked when a relative passes away who they thought was living fairly comfortably; then they find out that actually, even once they

even sell whatever property they have, there's still money owing.

Microloans: The member from Etobicoke North is correct that there is a global term, which is that you help in Third World countries particularly, and often it had great success with women. They were given microloans—just a few hundred dollars, enough to buy, say, a loom or a sewing machine or something like that—and they were able to get their family out of just absolute dire poverty and start a business. Unfortunately, with the debt we are paying and the compounded interest on the debt that we have here, I hope that Ontario is not heading to a point where we have to be asking other countries for microloans to help us out.

It would be nice if there was a way for people to access money when they need it. I think that the payday loan places have a huge, huge percentage of default. I don't think that it's enough to just say, "Well, they're mean business people and they're charging these exorbitantly high interest rates." The fact is that there is a reason why people go to payday loans. It's because they can't get a loan at a bank. We all recognize that. And why can't they? Because the level of default is so enormous.

That's their business model: "We are going to lend everybody \$200. We're going to expect that half of the people don't pay it back, and the other half pay back the capital and the interest on the other ones who never paid it back." That might be a fair business model, it might be a legal business model, but it doesn't sound like a great way to have our society function and carry forward. It would be nice if people were better educated and understood what they were getting themselves into, and were able to pay off that loan quickly and get back on their feet.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad that I'm here this evening to contribute to this debate because it is a very important issue. It's a very important issue because it talks about poverty.

We pointed out that not everyone who takes out payday loans is living in poverty. There are people who have jobs, but due to unforeseen circumstances—maybe they were laid off; maybe their spouse lost their job because the company moved out of Ontario and closed its doors. Then how do they make that next month's rent? They are forced to make decisions that maybe they wouldn't have done under those circumstances, and they go to payday loans.

These payday loans are popping up everywhere—they are. And usually they're popping up beside pawn shops, because a lot of people, when they are under economic strain in their household, will take their personal possessions and go to a pawn shop. That's another avenue of resources when people are desperate because they've taken some kind of hit or they can't make ends meet from the income that they have every month.

This government had the opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of Ontarians, who are having hard times making ends meet. I know that our critic from Bramalea–Gore–Malton had given some suggestions back in December 2014, when they were in committee. He's the NDP's government and consumer services critic and our deputy leader. He gave this government some very intelligent recommendations to be added to this bill, which would actually make a difference to people who are using payday loans—an effective way to make this bill work for people who use these payday loans. If they're going to continue to exist, then I think we need to make it reasonable for people to access these loans.

This week, we had a member from the Liberal Party introduce a bill to stop door-to-door sales. Why was that? We know why. Because people get into precarious situations, where someone comes to your door, they want you to sign this contract and you're being taken advantage of financially. This is what happens when people approach payday loans. They're being taken advantage of financially.

Yes, now there is a requirement in this bill to have these payday loan institutions explain the terms of the contract, but it's sometimes difficult to understand the complications of finance when you are so desperate that you've come to these agencies.

Back to the recommendations that the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton made that were very reasonable and could actually help consumers when they have to access these payday loans: Cap lending fees to \$15 per \$100. Can you imagine having to cap \$15 per \$100? That's 15% interest. That's supposed to be a reasonable recommendation. What is the interest on these \$100 loans now?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's 550%.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The member from Parkdale–High Park says it's 550%. That is incredible.

Even that suggestion wasn't considered. That's incredible to me.

The next recommendation he suggested was extending the grace period that consumers have to pay back their loans without penalty. The grace period was addressed in the bill, so that's something. I believe I read somewhere that the grace period has been extended to 62 days.

The other important recommendation was to create a database to enforce the ban on rollover loans. A database to track those rollover loans seems very reasonable, because it's compounded and people get into this cycle, as we talked about. Really, it's a cyclone that just drags them right down into an endless financial rabbit hole.

The last recommendation that was suggested was to ensure that the government works with financial institutions to provide alternative services, like credit unions and postal banking—I mentioned that before, and another member mentioned it as well—in low-income communities. The Conservatives are talking about this recommendation. So both parties on this side of the House agree that we need to find alternatives to payday loans. It's not just payday loans that we need to have access to when consumers find themselves financially strapped.

I'll let you stand, Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing as it's 6 o'clock, I am going to adjourn the House until Monday, May 9, at 10:30.

The House adjourned at 1759.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Simcoe–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiles, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC) *	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Scarborough–Rouge River	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith, Monique Taylor
Glenn Thibault
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yvan Baker
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Toby Barrett, Han Dong
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Peter Z. Milczyn
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Lisa Gretzky, Ann Hoggarth
Harinder Malhi, Jim McDonell
Eleanor McMahon, Lou Rinaldi
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Cristina Martins
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
Robert Bailey, Wayne Gates
Monte Kwinter, Marie-France Lalonde
Amrit Mangat, Cristina Martins
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Randy Hillier, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Laurie Scott
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Steve Clark
Granville Anderson, Robert Bailey
Steve Clark, Vic Dhillon
Sophie Kiwala, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahon, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Chris Ballard, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Joe Dickson, Jennifer K. French
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Lorne Coe
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Marie-France Lalonde, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Continued from back cover

Post-secondary education

Mr. Granville Anderson	9128
Hon. Reza Moridi	9128

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	9128
-------------------------------------	------

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Time allocation

Motion agreed to	9129
------------------------	------

Health Information Protection Act, 2016, Bill 119,

Mr. Hoskins / Loi de 2016 sur la protection des renseignements sur la santé, projet de loi 119, M. Hoskins	
---	--

Third reading agreed to	9130
-------------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Baptism of Poland

Mr. Jeff Yurek	9130
----------------------	------

Tamil Genocide Remembrance Month

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	9130
-------------------------	------

South Asian Heritage Month

Mr. Vic Dhillon	9130
-----------------------	------

Innovation and technology sector in Durham

Mr. Lorne Coe	9131
---------------------	------

Environmental protection

Mr. Paul Miller	9131
-----------------------	------

Maison Vale Hospice

Mr. Glenn Thibeault	9131
---------------------------	------

Tree planting

Mr. Ted Arnott	9132
----------------------	------

Toronto Raptors

Mr. Han Dong	9132
--------------------	------

Jewish Heritage Month

Mr. Mike Colle	9132
----------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Child Care and Early Years Amendment Act (Waiting Lists), 2016, Bill 195, Mr. Tabuns / Loi de 2016 modifiant la Loi sur la garde d'enfants et la petite enfance (listes d'attente), projet de loi 195, M. Tabuns

First reading agreed to	9133
Mr. Peter Tabuns	9133

1733387 Ontario Corp. Act, 2016, Bill Pr44, Mr. Dong

First reading agreed to	9133
-------------------------------	------

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Automotive dealers

Mrs. Gila Martow	9133
------------------------	------

Hospital funding

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	9133
-------------------------------	------

Lung health

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry	9133
----------------------------	------

Autism treatment

Mr. Lorne Coe	9134
---------------------	------

Newborn health

Mme France Gélinas	9134
--------------------------	------

Men's health

Mr. Joe Dickson	9134
-----------------------	------

Home care

Mr. Norm Miller	9134
-----------------------	------

Autism treatment

Ms. Catherine Fife	9134
--------------------------	------

Water fluoridation

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry	9135
----------------------------	------

Autism treatment

Mr. Robert Bailey	9135
-------------------------	------

Ontario Northland Transportation Commission

Mr. John Vanthof	9135
------------------------	------

Unaddressed mail

Mr. Arthur Potts	9136
------------------------	------

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS / AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

Mr. Bill Walker	9136
Mr. Michael Mantha	9137
Ms. Eleanor McMahon	9138
Mrs. Gila Martow	9139
Ms. Catherine Fife	9140
Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris	9141
Mrs. Julia Munro	9141
Mr. Arthur Potts	9142
Mr. Joe Dickson	9142
Mr. Lorne Coe	9142
Mr. Bill Walker	9143

Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Number Plates and Carrying Racks), 2016, Bill 191, Mr. Norm Miller, Ms. McMahon / Loi de 2016 modifiant le Code de la route (plaques d'immatriculation et supports de transport), projet de loi 191, M. Norm Miller, Mme McMahon

Mr. Norm Miller	9143
Ms. Eleanor McMahon	9144

Mr. Jeff Yurek	9145
Mr. Michael Mantha	9146
Mrs. Kathryn McGarry.....	9147
Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	9148
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	9149
Ms. Harinder Malhi.....	9150
Mr. Bill Walker.....	9150
Mr. Norm Miller	9151

Commission of Inquiry into Accessible Parking in Municipalities Act, 2016, Bill 187, Ms. Martow / Loi de 2016 concernant la commission d'enquête sur le stationnement accessible dans les municipalités, projet de loi 187, Mme Martow

Mrs. Gila Martow	9151
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	9153
Mr. Chris Ballard	9154
Mr. Tim Hudak	9155
Mr. John Vanthof.....	9156
Mrs. Julia Munro.....	9157
Hon. Mario Sergio.....	9157
Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	9158
Mrs. Gila Martow.....	9158

Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

Motion agreed to	9159
------------------------	------

Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Number Plates and Carrying Racks), 2016, Bill 191, Mr. Norm Miller, Ms. McMahon / Loi de 2016 modifiant le Code de la route (plaques d'immatriculation et supports de transport), projet de loi 191, M. Norm Miller, Mme McMahon

Second reading agreed to	9159
--------------------------------	------

Commission of Inquiry into Accessible Parking in Municipalities Act, 2016, Bill 187, Ms. Martow / Loi de 2016 concernant la commission d'enquête sur le stationnement accessible dans les municipalités, projet de loi 187, Mme Martow

Second reading agreed to	9159
--------------------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act (Strengthening Retirement Security for Ontarians), 2016, Bill 186, Ms. Hunter / Loi de 2016 sur le

Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario (sécuriser la retraite en Ontario), projet de loi 186, Mme Hunter

Second reading vote deferred.....	9160
-----------------------------------	------

Alternative Financial Services Statute Law

Amendment Act, 2016, Bill 156, Mr. Orazietti / Loi de 2016 modifiant des lois concernant les services financiers de rechange, projet de loi 156, M. Orazietti

Mrs. Julia Munro	9160
Mr. John Vanthof	9161
Mr. Chris Ballard	9161
Mr. Bill Walker	9161
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	9162
Mrs. Julia Munro	9162
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	9162
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti.....	9164
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	9164
Mr. Arthur Potts	9164
Mr. Tim Hudak.....	9165
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	9165
Mr. Ted Arnott	9165
Mr. John Vanthof	9167
Mr. Mike Colle.....	9167
Mr. Robert Bailey.....	9168
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	9168
Mr. Ted Arnott	9168
Mr. John Vanthof	9168
Mr. Chris Ballard	9170
Mr. Robert Bailey.....	9170
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	9170
Mrs. Laura Albanese	9171
Mr. John Vanthof	9171
Mrs. Gila Martow.....	9171
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	9173
Mr. Shafiq Qadri.....	9173
Mr. Bill Walker.....	9173
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	9174
Mrs. Gila Martow.....	9174
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	9174
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	9175

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 5 May 2016 / Jeudi 5 mai 2016

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016, Bill 135, Mr. Chiarelli / Loi de 2016 modifiant des lois sur l'énergie, projet de loi 135, M. Chiarelli

Hon. Bob Chiarelli	9107
Ms. Eleanor McMahon.....	9110
Mr. John Yakabuski	9114
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	9115
Ms. Sophie Kiwala.....	9115
Mr. Norm Miller	9115
Ms. Eleanor McMahon.....	9116
Mr. John Yakabuski	9116
Third reading debate deemed adjourned	9117

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Lorne Coe.....	9117
Mr. Joe Dickson	9117
Mr. Norm Miller	9117
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	9118
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	9118
Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	9118
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	9118
Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris.....	9118
Mrs. Julia Munro.....	9118
Miss Monique Taylor.....	9118
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	9118
Mr. Todd Smith.....	9118
Ms. Jennifer K. French.....	9118
Ms. Sylvia Jones	9118
Miss Monique Taylor.....	9118
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	9118

Order of business

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	9118
------------------------------------	------

Death of member's son

Mr. Jim Wilson	9118
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	9118

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Autism treatment

Mr. Patrick Brown.....	9119
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	9119
Ms. Sylvia Jones	9119

Hon. Tracy MacCharles	9119
Mr. Todd Smith.....	9119

Autism treatment

Mrs. Gila Martow	9119
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	9119
Mr. Tim Hudak.....	9120
Mr. Ted Arnott	9120
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	9120

Autism treatment

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	9120
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	9120
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	9121

Energy policies

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	9121
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	9121

Autism treatment

Ms. Laurie Scott.....	9122
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	9122
Mr. Robert Bailey.....	9122

Autism treatment

Miss Monique Taylor	9123
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	9123
Hon. Liz Sandals	9123

Accès à la justice

M. Shafiq Qaadri.....	9124
L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur	9124

Autism treatment

Mr. Bill Walker	9124
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	9125
Mr. Ernie Hardeman.....	9125

Member's conduct

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	9125
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	9125

Education funding

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris	9126
Hon. Liz Sandals	9126

Autism treatment

Mrs. Julia Munro.....	9126
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	9126
Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	9127
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	9127

Hospital funding

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	9127
Hon. Eric Hoskins	9127

Continued on inside back cover

